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BIBLE CLASSES

AND PRIVATE STUDENTS

ISRAEL'S GOLDEN AGE

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ISRAEL'S GOLDEN AGE

BY J. DICK FLEMING, B.D.

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THE STORY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

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ISRAEL'S GOLDEN AGE

THE STORY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

CHAPTER I.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HEBREWS IN CANAAN.

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CHAPTER I.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HEBREWS IN CANAAN.

1. **The Conquest of Canaan.**—When the tribes of the Hebrews crossed the Jordan to take possession of Canaan,—the land flowing with milk and honey,—they soon found that they were engaged on an enterprise harder than they had dreamed. Doubtless they were inspired with all the natural courage which resulted from their desert training, and they were fired by a religious enthusiasm which made them expect great things from the God who had so wonderfully helped them in the past. But the nations whom they purposed to subdue, and if possible to exterminate, were no mean foes. Not only had they the advantage of fighting for their hearths and homes, but they were better equipped for warfare than their invaders. Unlike the nomad tribes of the Sinai peninsula and the hardy but rude mountaineers of the East Jordan land, the peoples of Canaan had learned many of the arts of civilisation, and had used them to improve their methods of war. They had settled down to agricultural and city life: they dwelt in walled towns and villages which greatly added to their defensive strength. If, as a trading community, they had lost something of their native hardihood and come under the enervating influence of luxurious habits, they made up for this loss by the improvement of their weapons and accoutrements of war. They had horses and chariots of war, which were especially effective in the valleys,

and were greatly dreaded by their enemies. Add to this that, here and there throughout the land, there were still remnants of the larger-boned races, the "giants" of former days, and it will not be difficult to realise what a formidable task awaited the invaders.

2. In one respect, however, the Canaanites were at a disadvantage: they were weak by reason of their disunion. They had no national or even tribal organisation: every city was a law to itself, and under its own independent king. The most probable explanation of this lack of central organisation is to be found in the view that the Canaanites had been till recently under the domination of Egypt, and that the same troubles which favoured the exodus of the Hebrews also brought the Egyptian domination of Canaan to an end. It seems impossible as yet to synchronise the story of the exodus and of the conquest of Canaan with the history of the Egyptian Pharaohs; but we know that for some centuries the Pharaohs from Thothmes III. onward exercised or claimed a suzerainty over Canaan and Syria; and we may fairly suppose that at this time their hold was relaxed, leaving Canaan without a head and without a protector.

3. The story of Israelitish conquest, as given in the Book of Joshua, raises questions of no little difficulty. The prevailing view throughout the book is that the conquest was undertaken and accomplished by Israel as a whole under the leadership of Joshua.[1] Together the tribes crossed the Jordan, under portents quite as strange as had attended them in the crossing of the Red Sea. Together they stormed Jericho and Ai, devoting both cities to destruction in the name of Jehovah. Together they smote the coalition of kings under Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem in the great battle of Gibeon; and together once more they smote the kings of the north by the waters of Merom. And these conquests were pursued both in the south and in the north, till all Canaan (within its ordinary limits) was practically in Joshua's hands. Thereafter Joshua distributed to each tribe its

[1] This is true as well of the J and E documents as of those assigned to D[2].

inheritance by lot; and so the great war of conquest closed. "So the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."[1]

4. No sooner, however, do we study the details of the conquest in the latter chapters of Joshua and in the first chapter of Judges, than we discover that a large part of the conquest of the various territories was accomplished by individual tribes, or by groups of tribes, fighting on their own behoof; and, further, that the conquest was by no means so decisive and thorough as the general statements led us to imagine. It is scarcely possible to doubt that we have in many instances duplicate accounts of the same facts, and that many conquests attributed to Joshua and all Israel generally were, more exactly speaking, carried out by the tribes working for their own hand.[2] In such cases we must, of course, give the preference to the account which gives the more particular details. One can easily understand how, by a certain foreshortening of vision, much might be ascribed to the great leader of the invasion which really took place beyond his sphere of command, and even long after his death.

5. The frank recognition of this divergence prepares the way for the discernment of its true limits. The two points of view—that of national and that of separate tribal action—are not necessarily exclusive; nor is there anything in the later details which disturbs the tradition that the tribes in the first place crossed the Jordan together, and made a united attack on the

[1] Josh. xxi. 43–45; and cf. x. 40–43, xi. 23.

[2] *e.g.* as to Hebron and Debir, cf. Josh. x. 36–39 with Josh. xv. 13–19, Judg. i. 10–15; as to Hormah, Josh. xii. 14 with Judg. i. 17; as to Gezer Josh. x. 33 with Josh. xvi. 10, Judg. i. 29, etc.

land. It is quite conceivable, that after the first successful onslaughts the tribes separated in order to occupy the land and to carry their conquests farther; and that this separation took place with Joshua's approval. In all probability this separation began only after the two great battles of Gibeon and Merom, when Joshua crushed the coalitions of kings in the south and north, and thus prepared the way for the further conquest of the individual towns and their territories.[1] When the back of the resistance was thus broken, it would seem that Judah and Simeon, together with the Kenites and the Kenizzites (Caleb and Othniel), proceeded to the conquest of the south country, while the house of Joseph and the remaining tribes spread themselves towards the north, and battled with the Canaanites with varying success. In these later conquests it is probable that Joshua continued as the leader of the tribe of Ephraim, to which he belonged, and assisted them to make good their possession of the central plateau of Canaan.

6. But whatever may have been the precise course of the conquest, there is no doubt as to the results actually attained. While Israel gradually acquired a dominating power in the land, the Canaanites were by no means exterminated, nor did they lose all power within the circle of the conquered territory. Judah

[1] Wellhausen rejects the idea of a united invasion, and in order to find room for a settlement of Simeon and Levi at Shechem (cf. Gen. xxxiv., xlix. 5–7), supposes a first invasion by Judah, Simeon, and Levi,—an invasion almost abortive,—followed later by a second invasion of Joseph and the other tribes under Joshua. Others (Kittel, Kent) suppose that the tribes of Judah and Simeon separated from the rest after the capture of Jericho. It is difficult to follow Wellhausen in the somewhat airy speculation with which he starts; and the argument for the separation of the tribes after the fall of Jericho (Judg. i. 16, where the Kenite is said to have started with Judah for the south from "the city of palm trees," *i.e.* Jericho) is not at all conclusive. Gilgal near Jericho was for a long time the headquarters of Joshua's army. It is hard to conceive the great battles of Gibeon and Merom otherwise than as a supreme effort on both sides—coalition against coalition. Either we must reject these battles as mythical, or we must take them as they are represented, as the two great drastic victories of a united nation, which paved the way for the further conquest of the land.

and Ephraim came off best: Judah seized the southern hill-country between the Dead Sea and the land of the Philistines, while the house of Joseph occupied the fertile land between Jericho and the plain of Esdraelon. Yet Judah could make no headway against the peoples in the valley (Avvim, Geshurites, Philistines, and others), and only gradually acquired power by incorporating within its league various non-Israelitish clans; while to the northward of its territory it was separated from the other tribes by a huge wedge of Canaanitish cities,[1] which were either allied with Israel, or independent. Another great line of Canaanitish cities remained in the plain of Esdraelon,[2] extending between the Jordan and the sea. The tribes beyond the great plain were even less successful. In the case of Asher and Naphtali, it is even said that these tribes dwelt in the midst of Canaanites.[3] The last tribe to find a settlement was Dan, which was forced to migrate from the south to the far north, to Laish, near the sources of the Jordan.

7. Doubtless this subjugation of the land in detail occupied a considerable time, and was carried out in a great variety of ways. After the first enthusiastic onslaughts, in which the Hebrews applied the terrible law of sacred extermination (Herem), and carried all before them, the tribes would find it to their advantage to league themselves with certain cities so as to war more freely with others, or, when the issues of war were not decisive, to enter into more permanent contracts of friendly alliance. In the north, particularly, where Canaanite and Israelite mingled together and divided the territory pretty equally, it is possible that the inter-

[1] Jerusalem, Gibeon, Beeroth, Chephirah, Kiriathjearim, Aijalon, Shaalbim, Beth-Shemesh, and Gezer (Josh. ix. 17; Judg. i. 29, 35). The accounts vary as to Jebus or Jerusalem (cf. Josh. xv. 63, Judg. i. 21 with Judg. i. 8: the latter perhaps an anticipation of David's conquest), but in any case Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Jebusites.

[2] Beth-shan, Ibleam, Endor, Jezreel (?), Taanach, Megiddo, and Dor (Josh. xvii. 11–13; Judg. i. 27, 28). Shechem, to the south, likewise remained in large measure a Canaanitish town (cf. the story of Abimelech, Judg. ix.).

[3] Judg. i. 32, 33.

penetration took place quite gradually and peaceably, and that only by slow stages did the Hebrew tribes come to dominate their neighbours. In the south also the Hebrews must have come at last to some terms of mutual toleration and alliance with the groups of Canaanitish towns that remained. In Judah and elsewhere, the Hebrews had no hesitation in strengthening themselves by friendly alliances with other clans. The more rigid theory which regarded all alliance and intermarriage with the Canaanites as an abomination, and extended the law of Herem to all without discrimination, was certainly never applied, and probably represents a much later standpoint.[1]

8. **The Iron Age.**—Scarcely had the Hebrews entered into substantial possession of their territories, than they were called to defend their possessions from new aspirants to the land. At various times the tribes of Moab or Ammon or Midian swept over the land, carrying death and desolation, and greatly outnumbering the forces that gathered for the defence. It was only after a term of years, and by the most heroic efforts, that these unwelcome visitants were expelled. At another time the Canaanites of the north under Sisera made a supreme effort to recover their position in the land, and for some time they carried all before them ; but the prophetess Deborah woke the slumbering religious and national sentiment,—many of the tribes united their strength under Barak's leadership,—and in one crowning victory by the river Kishon the power of the Canaanite was finally broken. Later still the Philistines appeared in the field, and proved the deadliest foe the Hebrews had yet to encounter, fastening on the land with the evident determination to establish

[1] Cf. Deut. vii. 1–4, xx. 16–18, which prescribes the total destruction of all Canaanites, and the prohibition of all covenants and intermarriage with them. In several cases where the Herem is said to have been applied (Josh x. 28–39), we must give the preference to the more exact accounts which are preserved from earlier sources, which make no mention of the Herem (Josh. xvi. 10, xv. 13–19 ; Judg. i. 10–15, 29).

there a permanent sovereignty. They would probably have succeeded, had not the very extremity of the Hebrews brought about a strong reaction of national and religious feeling, by which the power of Israel was revived.

9. The data are lacking for any exact and continuous account of this troubled period. In the Book of Judges the various tribal traditions have been gathered together, and set in a framework that often fits but ill with the facts narrated. The vague word "Judge" is applied indifferently to local warrior-heroes like Samson, as well as to more or less national figures like Gideon or Deborah: and it is only a misreading of the facts to think that any definite office was implied, or that any individual so named exercised a judicial authority over all Israel. During those centuries of tribal anarchy there was evidently no such thing as a national government, and only in rare instances did national sentiment revive, and lead to a confederation of several tribes against a common enemy.[1] Nor has any solution been found of the chronological problem: the harmonising attempts—which apply the principle that many of the periods named are synchronous instead of successive—can only lead to an uncertainty[2] as to the actual facts. We must be content, therefore, to regard this period as one of the darkest ages of Israel's

[1] According to the Song of Deborah, Barak was followed by the men of Benjamin, Ephraim, Machir (Manasseh), Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali. Reuben, Gilead (Gad), Dan, and Asher are condemned for taking no part in the conflict; while Judah and Simeon are not even mentioned.

[2] The chronological data of the Bible were doubtless meant to harmonise with the general statement in 1 Kings vi. 1, that 480 years (twelve generations of forty years) had elapsed between the exodus from Egypt and the building of the temple in the fourth year of Solomon. But if we add together the periods of the judges and the interregna of oppression as given in Judges, we arrive at a total of 410 years, or, omitting the period of Samson as included in the time of Philistine oppression, 390 years. When we add to this the 40 years of the wilderness journey, x for the time of Joshua, 20 or 40 for Eli, y for Samuel, 20 for Saul (?), 40 for David, and 4 for Solomon, we have as total for the whole period (534 or) $514+x+y$ years. The explanations given of the discrepancy are not wanting in suggestiveness; but they are not constructively helpful.

history, and its records as affording us only typical side glimpses of the conditions that prevailed.

10. The story as now told in Judges takes the point of view that all these invasions with their accompanying miseries were a judgment on the Hebrews for their declension from the true worship of Jehovah; and that all the heroic exploits which led to the expulsion of the invaders were the tokens of Jehovah's saving grace to a repentant people. The conception of a nation passing through a succession of moral conditions—of corruption followed by invasion, and again of repentance followed by deliverance—may imply a unity of national sentiment such as seldom exists, and seems to present too mechanically the operations of Providence; yet the prophetic view has a substantial truth. The great danger to which Israel was exposed at this time lay in its association with the Canaanites. The conquerors of Canaan were in many respects inferior to the peoples they had conquered, and had much to learn from them in the arts of civilisation. They adopted their methods of agriculture, and of settled city life; they had constant dealings with them in trade; they learned from them improved methods of war as well as improved habits of living in time of peace. Intermarriage prevailed more or less extensively, and as time went on the native peoples were more and more absorbed by the ruling race. The danger was that the same process should take place in the sphere of morals and religion; and that in these respects, too, the Canaanitish customs should come to prevail. It was more than a danger: in point of fact the two religions were to some extent fused, and the Baal-gods of nature gave some of their attributes to the God of the Hebrews. Both Israelite and Canaanite worshipped on the high places; and both held harvest thanksgiving festivals in similar fashion in honour of the giver of oil and corn and wine. But what was worse, the lower superstitions of the Canaanites affected the very conception of Jehovah, narrowing His Divinity, localising His presence, and so favouring the growth of a vulgar idolatry. We have no reason to suppose that the Hebrews were altogether

free from idolatry even in the earlier Mosaic time ; but in these later days the thought of Jehovah as the nation's God and Saviour fell more and more into the background, and idolatry greatly increased. We need only refer here to the ephod (or idol of Jehovah) which Gideon set up at Ophrah, after which "all Israel went a-whoring," to the similar idolatrous superstitions of the Danites,[1] or to the terrible vow of Jephthah, implying the recrudescence of human sacrifice. When such things were possible, even among fervent believers in Jehovah, it is evident that the very basis of Israel's worship of Jehovah, as distinct from Canaanite Baalism, was in deadly peril. We may well believe, therefore, that the calamities that befell Israel in the course of these centuries were true chastisements of the Lord, leading the people to fall back with more earnestness upon the God of their fathers, their wonderful deliverer in the past. In the zeal of a Barak or a Gideon, and in the inspiring Song of Deborah, we see something of the nature of a spiritual revival. And when, in the last years of this period, the Divine chastening came in its utmost severity,—in the crisis of the Philistine oppression,—we shall see Israel rising to its feet as a nation conscious of its unity and strength, and, with Jehovah for its watchword, shaking itself from its degradation, and ushering in a more hopeful era.

[1] Judg. xviii.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOUNDING OF THE KINGDOM.

Paragraphs 11–13. The Philistine Subjugation.
1 Sam. iv., xiii. 19–22.

11. The Philistines.
12. The Battle of Aphek.
13. Its disastrous Consequences for Israel.

14–20. Beginnings of Revival.

14. The Possibilities in Israel.
15. The religious Enthusiasts. 1 Sam. x. 5–7, 10–13, xix. 18–24.
16. Their Influence on the People.
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18. Samuel's early Life and Activity. 1 Sam. vii.; cf. also i.–iii.
19. The Necessity of Union, and the Idea of the Kingdom.
20. Samuel's Attitude to the Monarchy. 1 Sam. ix.–x. 16; cf. viii., x. 17–24, xii.

21–27. Saul's Anointing and Self-dedication. 1 Sam. ix.–x. 16.

21. Saul's early Days.
22. His Meeting with Samuel the Seer, who anoints him.
23. Saul among the Prophets.
24. The religious Crisis in Saul's Life.
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26. Their Possibilities for the Future.
27. Was the Experience ever repeated? 1 Sam. xix. 18–24.

28–32. How Saul founded the Kingdom. 1 Sam. xi.

28. The Deliverance of Jabesh-Gilead.
29. Saul made King. 1 Sam. xi. 15; cf. x. 17–24.

30–32. Lessons from Saul's Elevation.

30. As due to Chance.
31. As due to Saul's heroic Energy.
32. As due to God's Choice.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOUNDING OF THE KINGDOM.

11. **The Philistine Subjugation.**—For many years the Philistines were the foremost antagonists of Israel. They were intruders in the land of Canaan like the Israelites themselves; but the time of their invasion—as indeed their entire earlier history—is involved in great obscurity. They came originally from Caphtor, commonly identified with the island of Crete—whence probably the name Cherethites given to a southern Philistine tribe; while other indications imply a connection with Egypt.[1] The various data are harmonised by the supposition that they first wandered from Crete to the land of Egypt, and thence later migrated to the coast-land of Canaan. The land they coveted was then occupied by the Avvim, a Canaanitish tribe: dispossessing these, they built up a small but powerful State in the plains and coast-land to the west of Judah. Though not of Canaanite origin, they seem to have readily amalgamated with the Canaanite inhabitants, and to have adopted their

[1] Amos ix. 7; Jer. xlvii. 4; 1 Sam. xxx. 14. In Gen. x. 14, the "Casluhim" and the "Caphtorim" are mentioned together as the children of Mizraim, *i.e.* Egypt, the Philistines being derived from the former tribe. According to Maspéro, the Philistines are to be identified with the "Pursati" who are mentioned among the invaders of Egypt in the time of Ramses III. (*c.* 1200 B.C.). Defeated by that prince both by land and sea, they wandered to the coast-land of Canaan, and were permitted to establish themselves there as vassals of Egypt.

language and religion. They were a warlike people, further advanced than Israel in civilisation and the arts of war. Their five chief cities—Gaza, Askelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron—were ruled by independent military princes, who were closely united in military confederation. It was the deadly conflict with this warlike race which drew the tribes of Israel together, and led to the founding of the kingdom.

12. In the preceding period of their history, the anarchic period of the "Judges," the Israelites had frequently waged war with their formidable neighbours in the plain. Fortune had not declared decisively for either side. Probably neither felt strong enough to attempt to dispossess or to subjugate the other: the war for a long time was little more than a series of border-raids without national significance. The story of Samson's exploits is referable to such a period of desultory border warfare. But at length—probably about the beginning of the eleventh century—the war broke out on a national scale, and the Philistines took a decisive step with a view to the conquest of the highlands of Canaan. Assembling all their forces, they moved northward by the plain of Sharon in the direction of the valley of Jezreel. They were met by the Israelites at Aphek, situated at the entrance of the valley of Dothan.[1] The defenders had mustered in great force. A double battle was fought, which proved disastrous to the Israelites: multitudes were slain, while the remnant of the army was routed and scattered. The ark of Jehovah, too, which the Israelites had brought superstitiously into the field, and on whose help they had counted on their second onslaught, was captured by the victorious Philistines, and placed as a trophy in the temple of Dagon at Ashdod.

13. How many of the tribes of Israel took part in this battle, and shared in the crushing defeat, it is impossible to say; but it seems to have been quite decisive for the nation as a whole.

[1] It is assumed here that this is the same Aphek as that mentioned in 1 Sam. xxix. It is not absolutely certain, however, that the two Apheks are to be identified. Cf. G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography*, 401.

The capture of the ark must have acted disastrously on the faith of all the tribes: it would seem as if God had failed His people in their hour of need, or even that Jehovah had proved inferior in power to the rival gods of Philistia.[1] This shock to faith must have reacted upon the nation's courage, and weakened the hands of any who might propose a renewal of the struggle. Nor does it seem that Israel at that critical time had any leader to unite the tribes and rally round him the scattered forces. All resistance was at an end; and the Philistines proceeded at their leisure to make themselves masters of the country. They destroyed the sanctuary of Shiloh, and put the priests to the sword:[2] they advanced as far south as Gibeah in Benjamin, where they placed a resident governor:[3] and they acted as lords of the whole land of Israel. The extent of their conquest may be seen from the incidental notice in 1 Sam. xiii. 19–22, which speaks of the total disarmament of the people. It may well be believed that the order of disarmament was made really effective only where the Philistines actually garrisoned the territory;[4] but there can be little doubt that for half a century or more[5] Israel was ground down under an iron heel.

14. **Beginnings of Revival.**—Though it seemed as if the spirit

[1] An indication of this feeling may be found in the story of the later fortunes of the ark. When the Philistines, smitten with superstitious fears, permitted the return of the ark to Canaan, it was allowed to remain for about a century in the half-Canaanitish town of Kiriath-jearim. It was only restored to honour in David's time.

[2] This is nowhere expressly mentioned, but may be gathered from Jer. vii. 12–14, xxvi. 6, and Ps. lxxviii. 60 ff. A few years later we find the descendants of Eli as priests at Nob.

[3] 1 Sam. xiii. 3. The word is also translated "garrison" and "pillar."

[4] The order must have been largely evaded; for Saul had no difficulty in procuring arms for his soldiers when he set out—on short notice—to the relief of Jabesh-Gilead.

[5] Within this period must be included the "judgeship" of Samuel, as narrated in 1 Sam. vii. Speaking roughly, there were two generations between the date of the battle of Aphek and that of the battle of Michmash in Saul's time; for Ahijah, who was Saul's priest at Michmash, was grandson of Phinehas, Eli's son, who was slain at Aphek (1 Sam. iv. 17, xiv. 3).

of the nation was finally broken, and nothing remained in prospect but political extinction, the cause of Israel was not altogether hopeless. Disunited outwardly, and still in the primitive stages of organisation, the people yet retained certain elements of union and strength that might be called into action. By their common faith in Jehovah, as well as by the feeling of their common origin, the tribes of Israel were spiritually bound together; and in this unity of faith and sentiment lay the possibility of powerful united action. And if Israel did succumb, for the time, before the better organised and disciplined hosts of the Philistines, the people still possessed the untrained courage and independent spirit of hillmen. If once these elements of faith, patriotism, and courage were awakened and welded together, the Philistines might soon find their suzerainty a thing of the past. These oppressors of Israel apparently considered that their subjects had finally reconciled themselves to their fate, and were all unaware that beneath the thin crust of their military rule there slumbered a volcano.

15. Now for the first time we hear of the "Bands of the Prophets." These were companies of religious men, who roused their enthusiasm by the aids of music and song, accompanied by dancing: falling at times into mad ecstasies which were generally regarded as manifestations of the Divine working. Little is positively known of these bands, who are here mentioned only incidentally. It is possible that such companies appeared even in earlier times, and that they came into special activity in periods of gloom and national depression. We cannot avoid connecting their appearance at this time with the calamities caused by the Philistine subjugation. Their fervid songs would give outlet—the only safe outlet in such times—to those national and religious sentiments which the Philistines had done their best to crush by their tyrannous domination as well as by the destruction of Israel's sanctuaries.

16. In such times of national depression, religion and patriotism would naturally go hand in hand. The cause of Jehovah was

felt to be one with the cause of Israel; and these bands of enthusiasts represented both. Though not, in any definite sense, teachers of the people, they would doubtless impart an enthusiasm that would stir both courage and faith. Wandering in bands throughout the country, and gathering round the high places where the people assembled for worship, they roused the people by their wild music and half-frenzied songs. Their fervid "prophesying" naturally inflamed the hearers to a deeper realisation of their subject condition, and to new desire to see the land of Jehovah freed from the yoke of the foreigner.

17. How are we to judge of such ecstatic manifestations? They are by no means isolated phenomena: parallels may readily be found among the Mahometans, in the dancing dervishes who dance and whirl themselves into ecstatic excitement; or among Christians, in those zealots and fanatic sectaries, who in various ages of the Church's history have astonished and troubled the sober world by their extraordinary behaviour. We should not too hastily condemn them. Religious feeling, when it escapes from the ordinary channels of sober thought, is like an inundation: it may exercise a fertilising power in some directions, while producing havoc in others, till new channels are found for reason and sober action. So we may judge—not too contemptuously—of these roving companies of prophets who sustained their enthusiasm or gave expression to it by the help of music and dancing. They may be charged with producing a spiritual fervour by unspiritual means, and encouraging excesses of behaviour that bordered on insanity. Yet we must remember that they were the forerunners of the more orderly prophetic guilds of Elisha's time, and represented the humble beginnings of the genuine prophetic spirit. And they served a useful purpose: in those days of gloom they did something to rekindle the faith and courage of the nation. Not by teaching addressed to the understanding, but by strains of rousing music and by enthusiastic praise of Jehovah, they brought a message of hope to Israel, and helped to revive

patriotic zeal and religious faith. With all their rude fervours, they represented the better spirit of the nation, now awaking from the lethargy of dejection and despair to a new vision of God, and a new world of order and righteousness.

18. Enthusiasm, however, requires guidance: and in this case the directing mind was found in Samuel, the aged seer of Ramah. An Ephraimite by birth, Samuel had come up to Shiloh some time before the Philistine invasion, where he assisted Eli in the service of the ark and the duties of the priesthood. After the fatal battle of Aphek, followed by the destruction of the sanctuary of Shiloh, he seems to have returned to his native place of Ramah, where he discharged the functions of priest of the high place. He also became known in the neighbourhood as a seer, invested with undefined supernatural powers. It is possible that during the long period of Philistine domination he exercised at times a much wider influence; and though the later accounts of his "judgeship" and his successful war with the Philistines cannot be easily harmonised with the continuance of Israel's subjection,[1] we may well believe that Samuel had conferences with the heads of the tribes, and urged upon the people the necessity of repentance and religious renovation. The danger was indeed imminent, that under the Philistine yoke the people might lose faith in the God of their fathers, and see little to choose between Jehovah and the Baals of Canaanitish worship; and no doubt Samuel strenuously resisted the encroachment of heathenish superstitions. Samuel also saw the evils of the political situation, and did his best to meet these. While seeking to strengthen the people's faith and their loyalty to Jehovah, he also endeavoured to revive their courage. Hence he could not but sympathise with the prophetic bands as helping forward the reforming movement.[2] His own enthusiasm, however, was of a more

[1] Compare 1 Sam. vii., especially vv. 13–17, with 1 Sam. ix. 16, xiii. 19–22.

[2] He is represented, in a later account, as head over one of these bands at Ramah (1 Sam. xix. 20).

enlightened kind. He was not content to stir up religious patriotic sentiment, but sought ways and means of realising the ideal to which it pointed. While the roving bands revived the dormant spirit of the people, Samuel took steps to direct the rising sentiment into wholesome channels.

19. The sole hope of political redemption for Israel lay in organised union. Past experience had abundantly proved that isolation and tribal division meant weakness and constantly recurring anarchy. The loose tribal organisation was no longer adequate to the requirements of a people who were settling down to habits of agriculture and trade, and who were surrounded by envious and hostile nations. If they were to live and prosper, some unifying organisation was absolutely necessary. Hitherto, in case of emergency, Israel had contented itself with temporary chieftains—tribal leaders (judges) who came to the front in the hour of distress, but whose authority was only limited and partial, and practically fell away when the pressing danger ceased. What was needed for permanent development was a power that should make itself felt over all the tribes, and bind them together in organic union. Doubtless the idea of the kingdom had long floated before the mind of Israel: it was suggested by the customs of other nations. But hitherto the necessity for it had not been so keenly felt, and the tribal feeling was too strongly developed. Earlier attempts, like that of Gideon's son, Abimelech, had resulted in little more than a tribal kingship. The decline of this tribal sentiment favoured the growth of a wider national aspiration, and paved the way to the realisation of the ideal. The present crisis and the burden of the common oppression forced matters to a head. The salvation of the State now clearly lay in political unity, and a movement began in Israel which favoured the establishment of a monarchy. Samuel grasped the situation. He it was who headed and directed the movement, and who found the suitable man.

20. Was Samuel favourable to this movement from the

beginning? The earlier accounts differ very considerably from the later on this point. According to the earlier narratives,[1] Samuel acted upon his own initiative, and under the inspiration of Divine guidance. God had looked upon the affliction of His people, and their cry of distress had come up before Him.[2] Evidently the institution of the kingdom was divinely approved, as necessary for the deliverance of Israel from the oppression of the Philistines; and Samuel carried out the Divine will when he anointed Saul, and inspired him to aim at the kingdom. But this narrative is supplemented, or modified, by later accounts,[3] which occupy a different standpoint. In these narratives the terrible straits to which the people were reduced by the Philistine domination are quite ignored; and the demand for a monarchy is connected merely with the maladministration of Samuel's sons (viii. 5), or with the dread inspired by Nahash, king of Ammon (xii. 12). The demand is represented as displeasing to Samuel, who regarded it as a virtual rejection of the invisible sovereignty of God, and endeavoured to dissuade the people from their purpose by showing them the arbitrary and despotic treatment they might expect under a kingly government.[4] These differing accounts may be so far harmonised by supposing that at first Samuel had very grave doubts as to such an innovation, regarding it as both sinful and unwise; but that later he overcame his scruples,—perhaps yielding to necessity,—and so took the direction of a movement of which he originally disapproved. A critical treatment of the sources has led others to the conclusion that the earlier presentation of the facts is more firmly rooted in the historical situation; and that the other presentation is more

[1] 1 Sam. ix., x. 1–16, etc. [2] 1 Sam. ix. 16; cf. LXX.

[3] 1 Sam. viii., x. 17–24, xii. etc.

[4] 1 Sam. viii. 7, 8, 11–18, x. 19, xii. 17–20. The differing accounts really start from different views of the historical situation. The earlier accounts presuppose the crushing domination of the Philistines; the later presuppose that the Philistines have been expelled, and that Samuel and his sons have been peacefully judging Israel. The attempt to harmonise such data does justice to neither branch of the Bible narrative.

probably a reflection of the unfavourable views which came later into vogue, when the evils of monarchic government had made themselves felt. That Samuel should have anticipated some of these evils is not impossible; but it seems more likely that, seeing the obvious advantages that would accrue from such an institution, he did his utmost to forward a movement so essential to Israel's restoration.[1]

21. **Saul's Anointing and Dedication.**—Saul, the future king of Israel, was the son of Kish, a well-to-do Benjamite of Gibeah. Tall and strong and unassuming, he had hitherto found full scope for his energies in tending his father's herds, and busying himself with the duties of the field; and he had therefore no thought of the high destiny awaiting him. To him, as to the Roman Cincinnatus, the call came while he was following the plough. Saul may be said to have received a double call: his contact with Samuel fired his soul, and the appeal of Jabesh-Gilead called into definite action the inspiration he had received from the prophet. In both cases alike Saul was pursuing his homely duties when the higher call came.

22. It was a seeming accident that brought Saul into the presence of Samuel. Some of his father's asses having strayed, Saul was sent with one of the servants of his father's household to seek them. He passed hither and thither through the hill-country of Ephraim; and for three days he searched and inquired in vain. He was about to return, abandoning the pursuit as hopeless, when his servant suggested that they should visit the seer, whose city (Ramah) was close at hand. Ascending to it accordingly, they found on inquiry that it was a day of special feasting and sacrifice; and they met Samuel himself on his way to the high place. The seer recognised Saul

[1] The conception of the sinfulness of the monarchy as a defection from God, it is futile to defend. The kingship did not take the place of a theocracy, but of tribal leadership or anarchy. The germ of the unfavourable opinion of monarchy is found in Deut. xvii. 14–20.

as the man of God's choice, the destined saviour of Israel from the hand of the Philistines. Setting Saul's mind at rest as to the lost asses, he brought him to the high place, gave him an honoured place at the feast, and on parting the following morning anointed him privately in Jehovah's name, at the same time predicting, seer-like, what should befall him on his homeward journey. We cannot doubt, too, that Samuel communicated to the young man his ideas regarding the nation and its need of a permanent head to save it from its present distress, and to make it strong for Jehovah's cause. His solemn words fell on willing ears: Saul's ambition was fired, and his spirit was prepared for the future that lay before him. He departed home with "another heart"—with a quickened patriotic ambition, and with something added of the seer's religious fervour.

23. As Saul was returning to his home at Gibeah, he was met by a band of prophets coming down from the high place in the neighbouring "Gibeah of God."[1] They were engaged in prophesying after their fashion: singing and gesticulating, and accompanying their action with the music of pipe and harp, tabret and psaltery. It was a stirring, but for Saul probably no unusual sight. In an ordinary mood Saul would have passed them by without further consideration. Sensible, practical man that he was, he had small respect for a fervour that spent itself in stamping the ground and filling the air with noise. But now, to the amazement of all who knew him formerly, Saul was for once carried away by the contagion of spiritual excitement. By his conversation with Samuel a new world had been opened up to him; and he was all the more susceptible to the yearnings and the fervent faith which the prophetic music and chanting naturally expressed. Forgetting, therefore, his usual dignity and reserve, and yielding to the enthusiasm of the moment, Saul threw off his upper garment and danced and gesticulated with the rest.

[1] For the difficult geographical question as to the various Gibeahs, see note on p. 37.

24. The saying that arose in consequence, "Is Saul among the prophets?" no doubt implied a certain criticism of Saul's conduct. Though the people were accustomed to the eccentricities of the professed prophets, they could not but express their wonder when they saw a man like Saul joining in their frenzied excitement. Unaware of the significant event that had turned Saul's mind into new channels, and remembering only the usually placid, even phlegmatic character of the man, they were astonished at the extraordinary change, and perhaps amused by it. We need not join them, however, in such derision. We do not deny the crudeness, or even, in part, the fanaticism, of the faith that stirred in these early prophets. By their want of intelligence, their disregard of propriety, and their appeal to mere emotion, they stood on a different platform from the later prophets,—men who were afire with the sense of the Divine righteousness, and who gave clear guidance to the nation. Yet we may well believe that Saul was a better man when, in the first flush of his new ideals, he yielded to the influence of these humble forerunners of the prophets, and to the Divine impulses they inspired. It proved at least that his soul was awake and responsive, and accessible to thoughts and feelings that were formerly strange to him: the religious nature of the man had clearly burst the ordinary conventional bonds. In the new prospect opened up by Samuel, which stirred his blood to lofty ambition, there mingled, doubtless, many conflicting motives; and it was still a question whether the merely personal element was to win the upper hand in the moulding of his aims, or whether his new life was to be sanctified by a spirit of self-surrender to God's will and of unselfish devotion to the well-being of the people. Now the decision was made. As he encountered the band of prophets with their stirring message, it was as if God spoke to him through their enthusiasm, calling him to yield himself in self-forgetting devotion to the great cause of his people's redemption. In responding to the prophetic summons, he was submitting to the power of the spiritual, and so preparing

himself solemnly for the new task awaiting him. He would have his new commission cleansed from earthliness: he would hallow his patriotic ambition by unsheathing his sword in righteousness, and devoting himself to God's service. That was the real hour of Saul's conversion, his spiritual baptism of fire! As he joined the enthusiasts, and threw himself heart and soul into their prophesying, Saul felt that he was entering on new paths, and that personal ambitions were being absorbed by the holier aim to which he now consecrated himself—the service of Jehovah in the deliverance of his country.

25. Such crises of feeling, and apparent turning-points of life, occur at times in all men's experience. There are moments even in the dullest and most prosaic mind, when unknown springs are opened, when higher impulses reveal themselves, and the things of God come home to the heart with a new power of appeal. It may be a case where the solemn questions of life force themselves upon the mind, requiring a sincere decision; or where one stands at the parting of the ways, and widely different motives strive within for the mastery. For the moment, it may be, better impulses prevail, and the whole nature is uplifted in a transport of impassioned thought and feeling. The man is transformed by the new enthusiasm: to his friends and neighbours he seems like another man. His ordinary reserve is laid aside: his self-regarding instincts are lost in a current of wider affections: he has yielded himself, body, soul, and spirit, to the mighty influence of the Spirit that has taken possession of him. It seems as if a new life had begun which must flow henceforth in pure and noble channels.

26. The promise of such moments of high vision is not always belied. They may prove the beginning of a new life in God, a life begun in great tempest of soul, but persevered in long after the inspiring strains of the early enthusiasm have passed away. The life once swayed by diviner impulses will often remain faithful to the Divine voice when it resumes the burden of daily duty, and, when the inundation of holy fervour subsides, may bear

back to the ordinary channels new streams of devotion, and energy, and patient hope. But we have also to recognise the warning fact—very solemnly illustrated in Saul's life—that the result may be quite otherwise. The real test comes later, when the first glow has passed and the cold light of everyday experience returns. The momentary surrender to religious enthusiasm is no guarantee of permanent conversion.

27. Was this baptism of fire ever repeated in the case of Saul? It is probable enough that the later account which describes a precisely similar experience is but a repetition of the story here given.[1] Yet it is not inconceivable that in later years, when Saul's life was darkened by morbid jealousy and despondency, similar circumstances might recall vividly the feelings of the past, and even awaken flashes of similar enthusiasm.[2]

28. **How Saul founded the Kingdom.**—Though Saul's mind was now fired with the ambition to establish the kingdom in Israel, and deliver his country from the hated domination, he concealed his thoughts in his own breast until a definite opportunity of action should present itself. Samuel had advised him to act as God would inspire him, when the occasion came ;[3] but the path to be pursued was not yet made clear, and therefore he returned to his former occupations in his father's house at Gibeah. The opportunity for which he waited came in an unexpected way. On the other side of Jordan, the town of Jabesh in Gilead was sore beset by the Ammonites under King Nahash. In all probability Nahash had seized the opportunity afforded by Israel's weak and divided state, and sought to enlarge his kingdom in the east, as the Philistines had done west of the Jordan. The

[1] 1 Sam. x. 10–13 and xix. 23, 24, which are both treated as giving rise to the proverb of "Saul among the prophets," are usually taken as duplicate versions of the same story. In that case the preference must lie with the former of the two narratives, if only on psychological grounds.

[2] Cf. F. D. Maurice, *Prophets and Kings*, chap. ii., where this point of view is earnestly and eloquently presented.

[3] 1 Sam. x. 7.

Jabeshites were almost reduced to the point of surrender; but the terms of submission proposed to Jabesh were cruelly hard, namely, that their lives should be preserved, but that all fighting men should be deprived of their right eyes. This atrocious condition, which if carried out would incapacitate the Jabeshites from further warfare, they had provisionally to accept: they agreed to capitulate in seven days unless the town was relieved. Meanwhile they hastened to send messengers to their brethren beyond Jordan, appealing pitifully for help in their cruel situation. The appeal, however, would have been unavailing—such, no doubt, was the depression of spirit caused by the long-continued Philistine domination—had not the painful news come to the ears of Saul. He was driving his oxen home from the plough when the summons came; and he accepted it as Heaven's call. While others helplessly lamented, Saul forthwith proceeded to act. Hewing a yoke of oxen in pieces, he sent the bloody tokens hither and thither through the land of Israel, with the accompanying threat that whoever neglected the summons should have his own oxen similarly treated. The summons so impressively given was immediately and widely obeyed. Mustering his forces hurriedly at Besek (between Shechem and Beth-shan), Saul crossed the Jordan during the night, and surprised the enemy in the early dawn. The Ammonites were completely defeated; and Jabesh was relieved from its dire extremity.

29. The eyes of all Israel were naturally turned to the man who had so conspicuously served them, and shown such able generalship. In the joy of their great victory the tribes gathered at Gilgal, between Jericho and the Jordan, one of their ancient mustering-places. There they hailed Saul as their king, and solemnly ratified their election by offering public sacrifice to the God of Israel.

30. **Lessons from Saul's Elevation.**—We may profitably look back at this point, and trace the different elements that contributed to bring about the elevation of Saul to the kingdom.

It was attributable in part to a marvellous chance. Saul went out to seek his father's asses, and he found—a kingdom! Had the asses not been lost, Saul in all likelihood would not have travelled so far south as to Ramah ; and not having met Samuel, he might never have imagined for himself any other life than the ploughing of his father's fields, and the tending of his flocks and herds. On such a trifle, as it seems, the fate of Saul and of the kingdom hung! And in all the ordinary experience of life, similarly, how great a place—under God—we must often attribute to the trifling incident! How frequently good and evil fortune alike seem to have been dependent on a word, an accident, a chance coincidence! If we trace any of the great events or achievements known to us, we often find the train laid in some passing remark or straw of circumstance, which came in at the critical moment, and determined, mayhap, the whole further trend and colour of men's lives.

31. But beneath the chances that make themselves visible on life's surface, there lies another, a more essential element of greatness ; and we have a profounder truth in the second picture of Saul's elevation, which represents it as the reward of his own worth and warlike energy. Greatness is not really determined by chances, but by the capacity of a man to use them. In the hour of his nation's need, when Jabesh was hard beset, Saul found the opportunity of revealing his worth. In this case, be it noted, the chance was given not to Saul only, but to all patriotic men in Israel. Saul alone acted upon it: he showed his worthiness to be king by doing kingly service. By his successful deliverance of Jabesh, by the promptitude and energy displayed in effecting it, he showed himself to be head and shoulders above the people, not in stature merely, but in character and elevation of spirit. Can we fail to read the deep moral lesson? No heroic achievement is explained, and no man's greatness is determined, by mere chances or accidents. These only determine the platform or sphere of a man's activity. The determining factor lies in the man's worth and character, in

his skill to take hold of opportunity, in his readiness to act nobly when the occasion comes. Had Saul been other than the man he was, he might have gone out to seek the asses, and met Samuel a hundred times, and gained nothing by it! And so, generally speaking, the amazingly fruitful accident is but the straw on the surface of the stream; and there flows beneath it, where true greatness is achieved, a whole river of high motive, earnest resolve, and daring deeds, which carry the man on to his achievement.

32. Still another picture represents the elevation of Saul as being due to God's choice.[1] A later narrative shows the people gathering in their families and tribes before Jehovah at Mizpah, where in the presence of Samuel the sacred lot was cast. The result was the selection of Saul as the man of the Divine choice. We may allow the letter of this later story to pass, if only the essential lesson is preserved. We may prefer to see the choice of God revealed more surely in the circumstances that brought Saul before the notice of Samuel, and in the proofs he gave of his fitness for kingly power. But we shall miss something of the truth, if we forget that Saul was in very deed the man of God's choice. That he was called and ordained of God, gifted with special powers of body and mind for the task of sovereignty, and surrounded by opportunities devised to give these powers scope—this, at least, was the faith of Samuel who anointed him, and of those who crowned him king. And must we not trace Saul's later failure to fulfil his high calling to the fact that he himself had too little faith in this high determining element in his career. If we may anticipate the impression of his later life, Saul had too little sense of his grave responsibility. Hence came his later acts of unchecked passion and tyranny; his jealousy unworthy of a king; his failure to prove himself after all a king after God's own heart. It was because he, and those who followed him on the throne, failed—as all did fail more or less—to realise fully their high calling, that there arose among

[1] 1 Sam. x. 17-24.

the later prophets of Israel the ideal of a King to come, who should "reign in righteousness" and maintain on earth the moral order: a king on whom "the Spirit of the Lord should rest, who should not judge after the sight of the eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of the ears, but with righteousness should judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth."

CHAPTER III.

THE EXPLOITS OF KING SAUL.

Paragraphs 33–39. War of Independence. 1 Sam. xiii. 1–7*a*, 15*b*–23, xiv. 1–46.

33. Preparations for War with the Philistines.
34. Opening of the War.
35. Position of the Armies at Michmash.
36. Jonathan's Exploit.
37. Defeat of the Philistines.
38. Saul's ill-advised Taboo.
39. Importance of the Victory of Michmash.

40–44. Further Conquests.

40. War with Edom, Moab, Ammon, Syria. 1 Sam. xiv. 47–52.
41. Harsh Treatment of the Canaanites. 2 Sam. xxi. 2.
42. Religious War against Amalek. 1 Sam. xv. 1–9.
43. Saul's Disobedience to the Law of Herem.
44. How far worthy of Condemnation.

45–50. Saul's Estrangement from Samuel. 1 Sam. xv. 10–35, xiii. 8–14.

45. Samuel's Anger and Judgment of Saul.
46. His Conduct at Gilgal.
47. Another Version of the Cause of Estrangement.
48. Conclusion as to Saul's Attitude to the Prophetic Party.
49. The Temptation of Saul's exalted Position.
50. The Breach with Samuel ominous for the Future.

CHAPTER III.

THE EXPLOITS OF KING SAUL.

33. **The War of Independence.**—Though Saul was now formally installed as king of Israel, he had still to enter into effective possession of his kingdom. The Philistines who still dominated the country must have regarded the new step as unfavourable to their pretensions over the land, and as virtually an act of rebellion against their authority. Saul knew he must prepare to make good his kingship against this dreaded enemy; and he lost no time in strengthening his position. Taking advantage of the enthusiasm of the tribes who had hailed him king, he retained with him under arms three thousand of the people, putting a third of his force under the command of his son Jonathan; and advancing from Gilgal, he took up his position in the central heights of Benjamin, at Michmash, Bethel, and Geba (Gibeah).[1]

[1] As the text of chaps. xiii. and xiv. now stands, there is evident confusion between the two names, Geba and Gibeah. Thus Geba (xiv. 5), Geba of Benjamin (xiii. 16), Gibeah (xiv. 2), and Gibeah of Benjamin (xiv. 16, xiii. 2) are used to denote the place of Saul's encampment; and again, the Philistine governor's station, previously named Gibeah or Gibeah of God (x. 5, 10), is here named Geba (xiii. 3). A third place of the same name was Saul's home, Gibeah or Gibeah of Saul (x. 26, xi. 4). Of these, Geba and Gibeah of Saul are expressly distinguished in Isa. x. 29. In all probability the site of Saul's encampment (we call it Geba throughout) was the hill now called Jeba: it stands opposite Michmash (Mukhmas), from which it is separated by a deep ravine, the Wady es Suweinit. Saul's Gibeah was probably the modern Tulêl el Fûl, lying about three miles south-west of Jeba. From the allusions made

34. The signal of the war was given by Jonathan, who slew the military governor[1] left in the district by the Philistines. Thereupon the Philistines prepared for a new invasion of the land, while Saul appealed to the tribes for further reinforcements. These not being forthcoming, Saul was obliged to retreat from his northern positions, which the enemy occupied. The advancing hosts inspired so much dread that the Israelites scattered in all directions, seeking safety in rocks and caves. It seemed as if the spirit of the people, which had risen for the moment in response to the heroic enthusiasm of Saul, had now been as suddenly quenched at the approach of their old oppressors. Instead of being reinforced, Saul's army was sadly reduced: when he joined forces with Jonathan at Geba, his three thousand men had shrunk to six hundred.

35. The two armies were now in sight of each other. Saul's camp at Geba was separated from that of the Philistines at Michmash by a ravine with steep and almost inaccessible rocks on either side. Saul had chosen his ground well. The Philistines saw that the small army opposed to them were in a position to make a strong defence. Instead, therefore, of making any immediate onslaught, they contented themselves with posting a garrison on the hill overlooking the valley, and occupied their time in raiding all the country to the north, and on either side of Michmash.

36. The situation was an extremely critical one for Saul and the six hundred men who "followed trembling" after their leader. It required some heroism even to face the Philistine

to Gibeah of God (the governor's residence) in chap. x., one naturally concludes that it was a sacred place in the near neighbourhood of Saul's Gibeah; but G. A. Smith identifies it with Ram-allah near El-Bire (*Historical Geography*, p. 250).

[1] The word here used (N°cibh) is not the usual word for garrison, and should probably be rendered either "governor, military officer," or, as the LXX suggests, a "pillar set up in token of victory." The expression "Jonathan smote (or slew) the N°cibh" favours the former of the two renderings; but, whichever be preferred, the significance of the deed would be much the same.

hosts with such a paltry and timorous band. Jonathan relieved the situation by a daring single-handed exploit which was remarkably successful, and turned the scales against the invaders. Trusting in Jehovah's help, and taking advantage of the dispersion of the Philistines on their marauding excursions, he devised a surprise. Without a word to anyone else, he and his armour-bearer descended into the ravine, and then climbed boldly up by the crag on the other side. As they proceeded they were observed by some of the Philistine garrison, who invited them scoffingly to approach without fear: apparently they were mistaken for some timorous Israelites who had fled from Michmash and hidden themselves in the ravine on the approach of the Philistines. Interpreting the invitation as a Divine presage of success, they drew near accordingly, and fell unexpectedly on the garrison, slaying a number of them. The rest, fearing an ambush of the Israelites, took to flight, and carried disorder into the Philistine host. The various bands, encamped on the surrounding hills or returning from their foray, were seized in their turn with panic, and fled in all directions.

37. The increasing confusion was so apparent that the watchmen of Saul's army noticed it from the other side of the valley. On hearing the report of it, Saul called to him the priest with the ephod,[1] that he might learn Jehovah's will; but before the inquiry could be concluded he saw that time pressed, and resolved on immediate action. He at once crossed over with his men, and joined battle with the enemy. The Philistines were already in terror and confusion; and Saul's advancing army completed their discomfiture. Moreover, those of the Israelites who had previously deserted to the Philistine side, or perhaps had been pressed into the service of their lords, now turned round and aided in their overthrow; while others who had hidden them-

[1] The LXX reading is clearly to be preferred. The ark at this time was at Kiriath-jearim, and no mention is made of its being brought to Geba. The "ephod" was not the linen ephod of the priestly dress, but an image of Jehovah which was used in early times in giving Divine oracles (so in Judg. xvii. and xviii.; 1 Sam. xxi. 9, xxiii. 6, 9, xxx. 7).

selves through fear came forth from their hiding-places and joined in the pursuit. The Philistines never recovered from their confusion, but gave way on every hand before an enemy that seemed to emerge from the ground. They were driven in headlong flight, first in a north-westerly direction to Beth-aven, and thence across the watershed and down the pass of Beth-horon to Aijalon—a distance of about twenty miles.

38. The defeat of the Philistines would have been still more crushing, had not Saul, in the excitement of victory, rashly laid a curse on the people if they should partake of food before the evening. His motive was not merely to ensure that there should be no relaxation of the pursuit, but to propitiate further the Divine favour by a special act of self-denial. The result of this unfortunate taboo was that the people who feared and respected it began to faint for want of food, so that the vigour of the pursuit was weakened. Still further untoward consequences befell. Being ignorant of the taboo, Jonathan partook of a little honey which he had gathered in passing through a forest. The people, also, at the close of the day when the taboo ceased, flew upon the spoil, and slaughtered and ate without regarding the usual sacrificial rites. Fearing the consequences of this breach of religious custom, Saul commanded that a great stone should be brought, and that the animals should be solemnly slain and their blood offered before the Lord. For his unwitting disobedience to his father's taboo, Jonathan would have been put to death in spite of his heroic exploit. The people, however, intervened on behalf of their hero, and insisted that he should be ransomed.[1] On the spot where he had set the sacrificial stone, Saul built an altar to Jehovah, in grateful recognition of his marvellous victory.

39. The battle of Michmash was really the Bannockburn of

[1] Some have thought that a human victim was substituted: if so, the fact has been omitted by a later editor. It has been pointed out, however, that animal substitutes were not unknown in the early laws (Ex. xiii. 14, 15, xxxiv. 20).

Israel's earlier history. The victory was a decisive one: it shattered the Philistine domination, and secured Saul in his position as king of Israel. And besides delivering the nation from subjection, it yielded moral results in the national life that were even more permanent. The national faith in Jehovah was revived and strengthened; and at the same time the blessings of national unity were more clearly realised. The people awoke to a new consciousness of their power, and a new confidence in God and their king, which could not fail to bear fruit in the expansion of the nation's life.

40. **Saul's further Conquests.**—The Bible writers do not aim at giving a consecutive political history, nor indeed had they material for such a history before them. We are not told whether the Philistines withdrew at once from the land, or how long they left Israel at peace before renewing their pretensions of sovereignty. Nor are details given in regard to many wars which Saul waged successfully with other nations bordering on his kingdom. With the exception of the Amalekite war, Saul's achievements are very briefly summarised. We are told that he warred successfully with Edom, Moab, Ammon, the kings of Zobah and Beth-Rehob,—Syrian tribes inhabiting the country between Gilead and Damascus,—as well as with the Amalekites and the Philistines. It is probable that Saul had other wars with the Ammonites besides his famous campaign for the relief of Jabesh-Gilead, and that — as happened later under David—the Ammonites called the kings of Zobah and Beth-Rehob as their allies into the conflict with Israel. From the summary given, we are justified in concluding that wherever Saul turned he was able to hold his own, and to drive beyond the borders of his kingdom all those nations that had formerly taken advantage of Israel's weakness. During Saul's reign, Israel was master of its own territory.

41. With a view to strengthen his kingdom, Saul seems also to have taken certain measures against the Canaanites that remained

in the land. We have already seen that at the time of the first conquest of Canaan the Israelites had left here and there throughout the land considerable zones of Canaanitish towns. In process of time many of these had declined in power, and had been absorbed by Israel; but there were still several places in the very centre of Canaan—such as Jerusalem, Gibeon, Beeroth, and possibly other places in that neighbourhood—which remained under Canaanitish rule, and were more or less independent. Such towns in the heart of Israel hindered the unifying of the nation, and might well be regarded as rally points for Israel's enemies. Apparently Saul desired to suppress their independence, or to bring them more completely under his authority. This he tried to accomplish by force. He secured the submission of Beeroth; and he pressed hard on the Gibeonites, forgetting the old bond of alliance (Josh. ix.). Though he stopped short in his repressive measures, he was later charged with having put many of the Gibeonites to death.[1] The policy of Saul was continued under better auspices by David, when he took Jerusalem from the Jebusites, and made it the capital of his kingdom.

42. The story of the Amalekite war is narrated with more fulness, and is specially interesting as illustrating the old custom of Herem, or the law of sacred extermination; and, further, as explaining Samuel's estrangement from Saul. The Amalekites —a nomad horde inhabiting the Sinai peninsula—had been from the time of Moses the sworn enemies of Israel. They had often raided Judah, and had joined with Moab and Ammon and the Midianites in devastating the land of Israel.[2] Now that Israel was strong enough to take a long-desired vengeance,[3] a sacred war was proclaimed. The word went forth from Samuel that Amalek should be devoted to destruction: neither man, woman, child, nor any living thing was to be spared. Saul accepted

[1] The scanty data are found in 2 Sam. xxi. 1, 2, iv. 2, 3.
[2] Ex. xvii. 8–16; Judg. iii. 13, vi. 3.
[3] Cf. Deut. xxv. 17–19.

this terrible charge as a Divine command, and proceeded to put it in force. He advanced with a large force of soldiers from Telaim, below Hebron; and, after giving the friendly tribe of the Kenites a warning to depart from among the Amalekites, he surprised his enemies, and inflicted upon them a crushing defeat, pursuing them even to the borders of Egypt. Pitilessly, he carried out the command of Jehovah in regard to the Amalekite captives: with the single exception of King Agag, they were immediately put to the sword. The destruction of property was less complete: the less valuable part of the spoil was destroyed, but the best of the sheep and cattle were spared. Saul returned in triumph to Carmel,[1] where he erected a trophy of his victory; and thence he proceeded with his army and the spoils of war to Gilgal, to offer sacrifices of burnt-offerings to Jehovah.

43. In one respect Saul's war with Amalek was eminently successful: the blow thus dealt was so decisive in its results, that though they remained to harass Israel's borders with their roving bands,[2] they were never again a formidable foe to Israel. But Saul had come short of what was expected of him: he had failed to obey literally the charge to exterminate Amalek. It is true the law of Herem did not invariably require the total destruction of the spoil. The cattle and the spoil were sometimes reserved for the use of the people themselves; while again, in other cases, the valuables were brought into the treasury and dedicated thus to Jehovah—as in the case of Jericho.[3] But in this particular case the understanding on which Saul entered on the campaign was that Amalek should be entirely consumed. In saving Agag and the best part of the spoil, Saul fell short of what was conceived to be a sacred and inviolable religious duty.

44. The question whether Saul is to be condemned for his failure to carry out to the letter the cruel law of extermination

[1] A Calebite town lying about seven miles south of Hebron.

[2] 1 Sam. xxx.

[3] Josh. vi. 19, 21, 24; Deut. ii. 34, 35.

is not to be answered off hand. It leads back to another question, namely, whether Saul in disobeying the sacred custom was following the leading of his better conscience? An old legend tells us that Christ once came upon a man who was labouring on the Sabbath day, and so breaking the letter of the religious law as to the Sabbath rest; and He said to him, "Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, blessed art thou; but if thou knowest not, God's curse is upon thee!" In other words, if the action is motived by a contemptuous disregard of the standing law, it is wrong; but if it is inspired by some higher principle revealed to conscience, it is right, and will be blessed of God. Here, similarly, Saul's disobedience to the sacred law of the Herem must be judged in the light of the principle or motive from which he acted. If he spared Agag from genuine sympathy and fellow-feeling, or from a horror of shedding more human blood; and if he spared the sheep and oxen from the rising doubt whether God could really have desired or commanded such a purposeless slaughter: in that case we should certainly be justified in approving his disobedience as a mark of his clearer insight into God's will, and as one of those acts of humanity which led in time to the abolition of a barbarous practice. But there is also the other possibility; and in view of all the circumstances it is only too probable that Saul was acting here from merely personal motives and against his conscience of what duty required; and that he spared Agag with a view to his own self-glorification, and the rich spoil from motives of greed. It was certainly in this dark light that Samuel regarded Saul's conduct; and in the narrative of their discourse with one another at Gilgal, Saul spoke as a guilty man whose own conscience condemned him.

45. **Estrangement from Samuel.**—As the story proceeds to narrate, Samuel received a Divine intimation of what had befallen. Angry and grieved at Saul's failure to carry out his commission, he went to confront the rebellious king at

Gilgal. Saul met him with smooth words: he had done substantially all that was required of him! He admitted that the people had taken the best of the spoil; but represented that this was done not from any motives of greed, but in order to offer sacrifice to the God of the armies of Israel, who had crowned their crusade with success. Samuel was unmoved by such excuses. He assumed that Saul had spared Agag simply to grace his triumph, and the spoil to gratify his own or the people's avarice: the pretence of sacrifice was only a hypocritical excuse.

> "Does Jehovah delight in offerings and sacrifices,
> As in obeying the voice of Jehovah?
> Behold, to obey is more than richest sacrifice,
> And to hearken than the fat of rams.
> For rebellion is as the sin of soothsaying,
> And stubborness as idolatry and Teraphim.
> Because thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah,
> He has rejected thee from the kingdom of Israel."

46. In accordance with this stern judgment, Samuel made as though he would depart from the king, with the evident intention of taking no further part in the Gilgal celebrations. Saul sought to detain him by laying hold of his garment; but Samuel tore himself from his grasp, and the garment was rent. The prophet interpreted this as a sign that the kingdom was rent from Saul, and given to another and a better man. On Saul's reiterated request, however, Samuel was so far appeased that he remained to be present at the sacrifice, and did not break openly with the king. He did what he could to repair Saul's fault: he commanded that the captive king should be brought before him, and solemnly hewed him in pieces with his own hand: so carrying out the intention of the law of Herem, which Saul had too lightly disregarded. Henceforth he had no further dealings with Saul, but retired to Ramah, where he mourned over the fallen king as a father grieves over his prodigal son.

47. This story—which belongs to a secondary stratum of the

narrative—can scarcely be taken as affording a complete explanation of the estrangement that took place between Saul and the prophetic party. Another explanation is elsewhere given: connected, this too, with a sacrifice at Gilgal, and dating apparently from the beginning of Saul's career.[1] According to this version of the story, the prophet fell out with Saul at the very opening of the Philistine war. Saul was at Gilgal with his forces, waiting till Samuel should come and offer sacrifice. He waited the seven days appointed by the prophet, and then, as Samuel did not appear, and further delay seemed dangerous, Saul acted as his own priest, and offered sacrifice with his own hands. Samuel appeared at the close of the sacrifice, and, denouncing the king's folly, he declared that for this act of disobedience his kingdom should not stand. This story does not clearly explain how the difference was caused. We are not told why Saul should be asked to wait for seven days at Gilgal, in circumstances that were extremely critical: the evident reference to Samuel's saying at the time of Saul's anointing (1 Sam. x. 8) throws no light on the matter.[2] Further, according to the story as it stands, Saul waited the literal seven days, and only proceeded to offer the sacrifice when Samuel failed to appear at the appointed time. We must conceive Saul's sin to have lain either in being too anxious to proceed with the sacrifice, or in presuming to take the priestly function upon himself; yet the first might seem excusable in such a critical situation, and the last would more readily be regarded as a sin in later times, when the stricter priestly legislation was established.[3] The main value of this story is the indication it

[1] 1 Sam. x. 8, xiii. 7*b*–15*a*.

[2] Both the story and the reference in 1 Sam. x. 8 are evidently later insertions in the narrative, and neither is very happily placed. Between the time of Saul's anointing and the opening of the Philistine war, many things must have happened which Samuel could not have precisely anticipated.

[3] H. P. Smith (International Critical Commentary), who speaks of "the straits of the commentators," seems to afford another instance of them

gives that there were more grounds than one of Saul's difference with Samuel.

48. Without pronouncing definitely on the causes of the difference between Saul and Samuel, we may reasonably conjecture that a fair understanding continued for some time between king and prophet, and that many causes contributed to bring matters to an actual rupture. Not only did Saul at the beginning prove a brave warrior and an able leader, but to a certain extent also he had the religious welfare of the people at heart. It was probably under Samuel's inspiration and guidance that he endeavoured to purify the religious life of Israel by expelling from the land the soothsayers and those who had familiar spirits—people who made their livelihood by preying on the darkest superstitions of the people.[1] Doubtless he held Samuel and the prophets in high honour as God's representatives and spokesmen; and he himself had once been touched by the Divine fire of religious enthusiasm.

49. But Saul's success was his danger. Only a man of great strength of character could rise to such a perilous height of power and keep his soul unimpaired. Think of the revolution that took place in this man's life, when he stood forth from the ranks approved by his stalwart form, his merits, his successes, to receive the virgin-crown of Israel; and when there rose to heaven, with the smoke of the burning sacrifice, the joyful shout of an enthusiastic people, "Long live the King!" How exulting must have been the pride of his achievements! How grateful the incense of the people's praise!

"For lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;
And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!
High ambition, and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,—all
Brought to bear on the head of one creature—King Saul!"

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when he says, "The only conclusion to which we can come is that the author glorifies the sovereign will of Yahweh, who rejects and chooses according to His own good pleasure."

[1] 1 Sam. xxviii. 3.

Saul's achievements and success, unaccompanied by the spirit of obedience and steadfast adherence to God's will, seem to have proved his ruin. They led to an increase of self-will, and gave increasing opportunity for the exercise of despotic power. The keen eye of Samuel may have detected the weak spot in Saul's character long before it came to an open rupture; and many acts on Saul's part, now forgotten, may have contributed to the growing estrangement.

50. However it came about, the breach with the prophets was ominous for Saul. It was a breach with what was best in the religious life of the nation. It was a sign that Saul was moving away from the better principles that first actuated him: it was the first cloud of the gathering storm that was soon to sweep over his life, darkening his mind, and marring the natural nobility of his character.

CHAPTER IV.

SAUL AND DAVID.

Paragraphs 51–56. DAVID'S INTRODUCTION TO SAUL'S COURT. 1 Sam. xvi.–xvii.

51. David's early Life. 1 Sam. xvi. 1–13.
52. Saul's Melancholy. 1 Sam. xvi. 14–23.
53. David as Court Minstrel.
54. Story of the Fight with Goliath. 1 Sam. xvii.–xviii. 5.
55. Difficulty of harmonising Details of Tradition.
56. David's Friendship with Jonathan.

57–67. DAVID'S ADVANCEMENT AND SAUL'S JEALOUSY. 1 Sam. xviii.–xxi.

57. David's further Promotion: the Septuagint Version. 1 Sam. xviii. 6–30.
58. David the Nation's Favourite.
59. The Song of the Women, and rising Jealousy of Saul.
60. The Unworthiness of Saul's Attitude to David.
61. The Jealousy at first concealed.
62. David's Marriage with Saul's Daughter.
63. Saul's Attempt on David's Life: David's Escape. 1 Sam. xix. 1–17.
64. Other Traditions as to David's Escape. 1 Sam. xx.
65. Stories of David's further Flight. 1 Sam. xix. 18–24, xxi. 10–15.
66. David flees southward by Nob to Adullam. 1 Sam. xxi. 1–9.
67. Saul's Vengeance on the Nob Priesthood. 1 Sam. xxii. 6–23.

68–74. DAVID'S OUTLAW LIFE. 1 Sam. xxii.–xxvii.

68. In the Stronghold of Adullam. 1 Sam. xxii. 1–5; 1 Chron. xii. 8–18.
69. The Deliverance of Keilah. 1 Sam. xxiii. 1–13.
70. The Freebooter Captain in Southern Judah.
71. Dealings with Nabal the Calebite. 1 Sam. xxv.
72. Saul's Pursuit of David. 1 Sam. xxiii. 14–xxiv., xxvi.
73. David passes over to the Philistines. 1 Sam. xxvii. 1–6.
74. David's double game at Ziklag. 1 Sam. xxvii. 7–12.

CHAPTER IV.

SAUL AND DAVID.

51. **David's Introduction to Court.**—David, the son of Jesse, belonged to a Bethlehemite family of some note, being descended through Boaz from the ancient heads of the tribe of Judah. As the youngest son of a large household,[1] he had to take a humble position in the family: he was occupied in keeping his father's sheep on the desert steppes of Judah. In the simple and hardy life of a shepherd, he developed that physical strength and power of endurance which later stood him in good stead; while he also acquired some skill in music, and beguiled his leisure hours by playing on the harp (or rather guitar). He grew up to manhood a comely, valiant, thoughtful, and prudent lad, who believed in the future of his people, and trusted in his people's God.

52. It was his skill in music that first brought David under Saul's notice. In the latter years of his reign the king had become subject to strange fits of melancholy. An "evil spirit from the Lord" troubled him, showing itself in morbid seizures which alarmed those who were about his person. The manner in which these fits are described indicates that a change for the worse was taking place in Saul's character, and that the Divine spirit of his earlier days no longer inspired him. The cause of

[1] He was the seventh son of Jesse according to 1 Chron. ii. 15, the eighth according to 1 Sam. xvii. 12, 14.

this change is nowhere definitely explained, but we can scarcely help connecting it with his breach with Samuel and the prophetic party. Saul had begun his government of Israel with something of the prophetic enthusiasm, and probably for some time had been guided by the ideals of Samuel. In delivering the land from the oppressor, in exterminating Amalek, in adopting sharp measures for the suppression of the Canaanites, and in banishing from the land those who professed communion with the ghost-world, he was led by religious as well as by political motives, and was doubtless inspired by prophetic influences. The estrangement of this powerful party in the State must have left Saul ill at ease. His breach with Samuel was a breach with his own conscience: he felt that he was drifting from the policy inspired by his earlier faith. He was angered, too, by the isolation of his position, and perhaps felt its insecurity; for, indeed, it was hardly safe for a king in those days to be out of touch with the religious spirit of his nation. Saul's moodiness increased: his spirit was darkened by a brooding suspicion which manifested itself in fits of settled gloom or outbreaks of frenzied passion.

53. To relieve such fits of melancholy, David the young minstrel was brought to court: Saul's advisers conceiving that the soothing power of music might work a cure. David's playing had the desired effect: Saul was roused from his gloomy fit by David's skill. Perhaps the sight of the valiant youth, as well as converse with one whose faith was still fresh and untroubled, combined with the power of music and song to effect the cure. Saul came in time to love the youth; and as he relied upon his help when his morbid fits recurred, he attached him permanently to his court by making him his armour-bearer.[1]

[1] The beautiful story of the anointing of David by Samuel at Bethlehem belongs to one of the latest strands of the narrative, and there are insuperable difficulties in the way of its being regarded as historical in the modern sense. Not only do David's father and brethren fail to show any remembrance of such a significant act (1 Sam. xvii. 17-28), but David himself later speaks of Saul as "the Lord's anointed" (xxiv. 6, xxvi. 9), and makes no such claim in regard to himself (cf. especially xviii. 23). To

54. Another version of the tradition in regard to David's introduction to Saul rests it not on his musical gifts, but upon a notable feat of arms. According to this story, David was still at Bethlehem tending his father's flocks, while his brethren were with King Saul in the west, fighting against the Philistines. Though a brave lad, he was not yet a warrior: indeed, he was but a boy, quite unaccustomed to the use of arms (xvii. 33, 39, 42). The inveterate enemies of Israel had marched into the hill-country of Judah as far as Ephesdammim and the Vale of Elah, about sixteen miles westward from Bethlehem.[1] Saul's army was encamped on the opposite side of the valley, and separated from the enemy by a ravine or torrent-bed. As the armies faced each other, a champion came forth from the Philistines, Goliath of Gath. He was a giant in stature, being ten feet high: he was cased in bronze, and armed with javelin, sword, and spear. An attendant preceded him, bearing an enormous shield. This formidable champion challenged the army of Israel to find a man who would dare meet him in single fight. Morning and evening, for forty days in succession, he stood forth and defied the army of Israel; but though Saul made large offers to the man who should slay the challenger, no one ventured to risk such an encounter. By accident the young David arrived in the camp: he had been sent by his father with food for his brethren, and to learn how they fared. Hearing of the challenge, and

explain this silence, it has been supposed that the unction of David was not understood at the time, and that perhaps it was regarded by those present as a "part of the usual consecration of the guests in a sacrificial feast" (W. R. Smith). This explanation really robs the symbolic act of its meaning; for if Samuel veiled the significance of the rite from David and from his family, the intention of the rite must have been entirely unfulfilled. Keeping in view both textual and critical grounds, we must be content to take the story as a concrete picture of the truth that David was destined by God from the beginning for his high vocation; that he was in truth the Lord's anointed, and the man after God's own heart.

[1] The Vale of Elah is the modern Wady es-Sant, or valley of acacias. Ephesdammim is mentioned elsewhere as a well-known battlefield, and a scene of victory over the Philistines in David's reign (1 Chron. xi. 13 and 2 Sam. xxiii. 9).

observing the general dismay in the camp, David at once offered to do battle with the giant. He was brought before Saul, and, after overcoming the king's scruples as to his youth and inexperience, he went forth to meet Goliath with no other armour than his shepherd's staff and his sling. There ensued words of mutual defiance: the young hero meeting the contempt and the curses of his enemy with a confidence resting on faith in the God of the armies of Israel. As the combatants drew nearer, David put a stone into his sling—he had gathered it from the pebbly torrent-bed close at hand—and shot it with unerring aim at the Philistine. It sank into his forehead; and while he lay stunned upon the ground, David ran forward, pulled the giant's sword from its sheath, and cut off his head. At the death of their champion, the Philistines were dismayed: they broke and fled in disorder, and the Israelites pursued them beyond the border. At the close of the battle David was called into Saul's presence, and inquiry made of his name and lineage; whereupon the king attached the young hero to his service, and gave him a military command.

55. This story of David's wonderful exploit in the Vale of Elah is hardly to be brought into line with that which attributes his introduction to Saul's court to his musical gifts. The two stories may be partly harmonised by giving the preference to the shorter form of chap. xvii., as presented in the Septuagint Version. If, with the Septuagint, we omit those sections which tell of David's coming up from Bethlehem, and Saul's latter inquiry as to the young stranger,[1] the remainder of the story is more nearly consistent with the account of the preceding chapter. We might then suppose that David was in the field of Elah as Saul's armour-bearer; and with the omission of the last verses of the chapter the difficulty as to Saul's ignorance of his favourite attendant disappears. This explanation, however, does not quite attain its end; for even in the shortened form of the narrative the hero is

[1] The omissions of the LXX are xvii. 12–31, 41, 48*b*, 50, 55–58, xviii. 1–5. There are a few other small variations.

still a boy who has come straight from the sheepfolds, and knows little of war or courts. In the preceding chapter, the David who came to Saul's court as musician and armour-bearer was already a "mighty man of valour and a man of war" (ver. 18): not a youth, therefore, who needed to be equipped for the first time with the accoutrements of war, and still less a mere ruddy lad whose appearance would strike a Philistine with contempt. It seems better, therefore, to leave the story as it stands in our Bibles, and to admit freely that we have several accounts—not always consistent—of David's early rise to notice and fame. This admission is all the more necessary in the present case, as we have another tradition recorded elsewhere (2 Sam. xxi. 19), according to which Goliath of Gath was slain in the following reign by one of David's mighty men—a Bethlehemite named Elhanan.

56. While there is thus a difficulty in harmonising the stories of David's early life, we cannot doubt the uniform tradition that David performed wonderful exploits in the war with the Philistines, and so acquired favour in the eyes of Saul and all the people. By his valorous deeds and his modest behaviour he also gained the lifelong friendship of Jonathan, Saul's most valiant son. The two heroes exchanged armour in token of comradeship; and in the darker days that were near at hand David found in Jonathan a helpful and loyal friend.

57. **David's Advancement and Saul's Jealousy.**—The story of David's further promotion and of the beginnings of Saul's jealousy is given in the eighteenth chapter, where again the Septuagint Version differs considerably (chiefly by way of omissions) from the Hebrew text. The former has been generally accepted by modern critics as marking the earlier strand of narrative, and gives a more consecutive account of the growth of Saul's jealousy, as advancing step by step with David's promotion. According to this version, the story reads as follows:—

"And the women came out of all the cities of Israel, dancing in unison, to meet David, with timbrels and with joy and with cymbals. And the women came out playing; and they sang, Saul has smitten his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And this thing appeared grievous in the eyes of Saul; and he said, To David they have ascribed the ten thousands, to me they have ascribed the thousands. And Saul was afraid of David, and he removed him from him, and appointed him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. Now David was prudent in all his ways; and the Lord was with him. And Saul saw that he behaved very wisely; and he stood in awe of him. And all Israel and Judah loved David; for he went out and came in before the people. And Michal the daughter of Saul loved David; and it was told Saul; and the thing was pleasing in his eyes. And Saul said, I will give her to him, and she will be a snare to him. And the hand of the Philistines was against Saul (?). And Saul commanded his servants, saying, Commune ye secretly with David, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: become the king's son-in-law. And Saul's servants spake these words in the ears of David. But David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing to be the king's son-in-law? for I am a poor man, and of no repute. And the servants of Saul recounted to him according to these words spoken by David. And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David. The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines. Now Saul thought to make David fall into the hands of the Philistines. And Saul's servants told David these words; and David was pleased with the idea of being the king's son-in-law. And David arose, and went, he and his men, and smote of the Philistines a hundred men. And he brought their foreskins; and he became the king's son-in-law, and Saul gave him his daughter Michal to wife. And Saul saw that the Lord was with David, and all Israel loved him; and he stood yet the more in awe of David." [1]

[1] It will be noticed that this version makes no mention of the proposed alliance with Merab, or of the passionate outbreak of frenzy on Saul's part. The latter, psychologically considered, seems to be antedated. The Merab

58. Following this version, we have an intelligible account of the growth of Saul's jealousy, as advancing step by step with David's promotion. It seems to presuppose more than the single duel recounted in the previous chapter. The story of David's fight with Goliath may therefore be taken as a typical picture of many other battles with the Philistines in which David championed the cause of Israel, and gave proof of signal bravery. By his warlike deeds, combined with the charm of youth, and his attractive personality, he speedily rose to be the favourite hero of the nation; and ere long Saul himself had to stand second in the praises of Israel.

59. Thus we are told how, on one occasion, when Saul and David returned from the wars, the women streamed forth from the towns to greet the warriors and to celebrate their victory with music and dancing.[1] Doubtless they sang the praises of Jehovah, the God of battles, and of Saul their admired leader and king. But above even the name of Saul they set that of their favourite hero David, the champion of Israel, who had won his laurels in many a hard fight, and had led his soldiers from victory to victory. Their song was summarised in the refrain:

> "Saul hath slain his thousands,
> And David his ten thousands."

These words represent probably a summary of the language used: the drift rather than the exact words of their song of triumph. It is enough to suppose that the women dwelt somewhat longer on David's merits than on those of Saul, or that they manifested a more lively enthusiasm when they sang the praises of the younger hero. Without meaning to cast any slight upon Saul,

incident may refer to Saul's failure to implement his promise to give his daughter to the slayer of Goliath. As the story of David's marriage with Michal takes no account of such a promise, the addition regarding Merab is probably to be referred to a later source.

[1] "The Bedawin women still dance out with singing to meet the warriors returning from a foray" (H. P. Smith, quoting Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta*).

they might easily betray in words quite respectful to the king, the general feeling that David stood first in their estimation. In any case Saul felt himself depreciated : it was as if a wrong had been done to him. It is not easy for any man who has been accustomed to take the first place to content himself with a lower. And Saul was keenly jealous of his reputation. Chosen as king over Israel, not by any prescriptive title, but because of his personal energy and valour, it was natural that he, the nation's foremost man, should desire to maintain his position as the first warrior of his people. No wonder, therefore, he was displeased when the suggestion came to him, by his own observation and the praises so liberally bestowed on David, that he was being eclipsed by his former armour-bearer.

60. The jealousy was natural ; but, on the other hand, if Saul had been a better man, he would have submitted with a good grace to the people's estimate of David's superiority. Had he remembered that the true aim of every Israelite was not his own advantage or fame, but the independence and might and prosperity of Israel, he would not have been so readily offended. Had he possessed the generous spirit of Jonathan, he would have accepted David's warlike ability as a Heaven-sent gift to the nation ; and, repressing any feeling of soreness at the young hero's superior success, he would have rejoiced that such a valiant warrior had arisen in Israel. His growing jealousy indicated that Saul's character was changing for the worse. Now that he was king, he was yielding to the temptation of his high position : his generous devotion of spirit was on the decline ; the private interest of the king was weighing more with him than the public good of the kingdom.

61. For a considerable time Saul kept his jealousy carefully concealed in his own bosom. He did not yield to it all at once : he may have even battled against it as unworthy of his better nature. Certain it is that for some time David was publicly honoured ; and those who knew nothing of the king's secret mind thought of him as standing high in Saul's favour,

and entrusted at times with the most important king's business. Saul appointed him to a command in the army, making him captain of a thousand; he gave him other commissions, in proof of his confidence; finally, he retained him at court, and made him captain of the bodyguard.[1]

62. Honour and success followed David in every undertaking; the favour of the people increased. He was still further exalted by his marriage with Michal, the daughter of Saul: a union which was favoured by Saul himself, and gave David new dignity in the eyes of the people. Had Saul's jealousy been fully awake from the first, and his suspicion of David's loyalty aroused, he would scarcely have entertained any proposal of intermarriage with his rival, and still less would he have furthered it; but it is quite conceivable that he acted with a divided mind. He felt that the alliance with the hero would be an honour to his family, and so he approved and furthered the marriage; yet he allowed his jealousy to guide him in the matter of the purchase-money—the slaying of a hundred Philistines by David's own hand. By safely fulfilling the hard condition, David not only acquired new reputation, but added still more fuel to the flame of the king's jealousy.

63. The jealousy of the king became at length so fierce and uncontrolled that it could no longer be hidden. Jonathan first saw the impending danger, and, warning his friend to keep himself in hiding, he spoke with his father in the field, and expostulated with him. He so far succeeded in his efforts that Saul for the moment abandoned his evil designs. But new successes of David over the Philistines revived Saul's jealousy and raised it to an ungovernable pitch of hatred. A new fit of brooding melancholy seized the king. Unconscious of danger, David, as was his wont, was playing before him on the guitar, when Saul, transported to frenzy, cast his javelin at him, and tried to pin him to the wall. David evaded the weapon, escaped

[1] 1 Sam. xxi. 2 and xxii. 14, where "is taken into thy council" should probably be read "is captain over thy bodyguard."

from Saul's presence, and fled to his own house. Saul's mind was now made up, apparently, to rid himself of his enemy: he had David's house surrounded by guards, who were to slay him when he came forth in the morning.[1] David, however, escaped through the window by night. His wife assisted his escape by pretending to Saul's messengers that he was ill, and placing the teraph or household idol in his bed to further the deception. The trick gave David time to make good his escape from the district of Gibeah.

64. An independent and parallel account of David's escape, and of previous efforts of Jonathan in his favour, is given in chap. xx., which goes back to a time when David was still at court, and when no one apparently suspected Saul's evil intentions but David himself. Jonathan could hardly be convinced that David's suspicions were well founded.[2] The friends agreed, however, that David should remain in hiding for three days, and that Jonathan should seek to discover the king's mind when he remarked on David's absence from the royal table. It was also arranged that David should on the third day be in concealment near to a certain heap of stones, and that Jonathan should indicate to his friend the result of his observations by means of his archery practice, and his calls to the lad who went to gather the arrows. David's suspicions proved to be correct. On the first day of David's absence Saul gave no sign; but on the second he broke out into stormy invective against both David himself and Jonathan who befriended him; and finally he was so maddened by anger and blind passion that he cast his spear at his own son. Saul's hatred of David was thus quite apparent. Jonathan left the table in anger; and the next day he gave David the required sign with the arrows, letting him know that his only safety lay in flight. Thereafter followed an affecting

[1] It was contrary to Oriental morals to invade a sleeping foe, and particularly to violate the women's apartments.

[2] This could not have been the case if David had already been assaulted by Saul, and had just escaped from Saul's soldiers.

interview between the two friends, in which they took leave of one another, after sealing their covenant of friendship anew with their tears.[1]

65. David's further flight is likewise the subject of several traditions. Passing by the narratives which refer to his flight to Ramah, and to a momentary appearance at Gath,[2] we follow here the main narrative, which tells of David's flight southward.

66. It was natural that David should seek refuge in his own tribe. The mountain fastnesses of Judah afforded many a place of concealment ; and there he would be out of Saul's immediate reach. As he passed south, he halted at Nob, which lay a little northward of Jerusalem. It seems that the priesthood of Eli's house had removed to this place after the destruction of Shiloh ; so that Nob was at this time one of the chief sanctuaries of Israel.[3] Ahimelech, the priest of the sanctuary, showed all honour to David, evidently regarding him still as the king's favourite ; but he was amazed to see him travelling alone. David, fearing to be suspected, professed to have received a secret commission from Saul, and one requiring special haste ; and he persuaded Ahimelech to give him of the sacred bread of the sanctuary, as well as to inquire at the oracle for him.[4] David then proceeded on his journey, and found refuge in the stronghold of Adullam.

67. Ahimelech paid dear for his unsuspecting hospitality. When Saul heard that David had received friendly treatment at

[1] The story halts somewhat at the close ; for if the two friends could meet and converse, the device of the arrows was quite unnecessary. In any case the double device was not needed ; for if Saul proved favourable to David, there was no need for further concealment. It is possible that some needful details have been omitted.

[2] These are evidently duplicate versions ; cf. 1 Sam. xix. 18–24 with x. 10–13, and xxi. 10–15 with xxvii.

[3] The chief priest at Nob, Ahimelech, son of Ahitub, is doubtless the same person as Ahijah, son of Ahitub, and great-grandson of Eli, who served Saul in his opening war with the Philistines (cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 3). The name-endings Melech (king) and Jah (Jehovah) have practically the same meaning.

[4] Ahimelech is also said to have given David the sword of Goliath, which had been laid up beside the ephod as a trophy of victory.

Nob, he summoned Ahimelech and all the priestly household, and in the heat of senseless rage commanded them to be slain. The only man he could get to do the abominable deed was Doeg the Edomite, the wretch who had first given information against the priests. It is said that eighty-five persons in all were put to death; and at the same time the town of Nob was utterly laid waste, men, women, and children being ruthlessly put to the sword. Only one priest escaped—Abiathar, one of Ahimelech's sons. This descendant of Eli fled with the ephod to David, who welcomed him all the more cordially that he had been the unwitting occasion of his family's doom.

68. **David's Outlaw Life.** — David remained some time at Adullam. This stronghold lay probably in the west of Judah, not far from Socoh and Azekah and the Vale of Elah.[1] It was an ancient royal town of the Canaanites, and may possibly have been in their possession when David came seeking protection from Saul's wrath. In this town or in its neighbourhood David found security, and he did not remain alone for long. There gathered around him the warriors of his family and kindred from Bethlehem and Judah; and amongst these were the brave sons of Zeruiah,—Joab, Abishai, and Asahel,—who were henceforth devoted to his cause.[2] As David's breach with Saul became known, men came from all quarters to follow his standard. We hear of several heroes from the tribe of Gad, who came from beyond Jordan to follow the fortunes of the new chieftain. In addition to these, a motley company gathered at Adullam, men who found themselves in difficulties, or in debt, or smarting under the oppression of tyranny. David was fain to welcome every one who came with arms in his hand and a stout heart; himself outlawed, he had perforce to join company

[1] Its site is marked by some ruins bearing the name Aid el Ma. There are rows of caves in the neighbourhood. Cf. Josh. xii. 15, xv. 35.

[2] The sons of Zeruiah were relatives of David, 2 Sam. xvii. 25, xix. 13. According to 1 Chron. ii. 16, Zeruiah was David's sister.

with men who had broken the law, as well as innocent sufferers from it. The suspicions he expressed when one band of men came to him,—under Amasai,—and which were allayed only when the chief of the band made the strongest asseverations of loyalty (1 Chron. xii. 16–18), may be taken as a passing indication that there were among his followers men of little principle, who would betray their leader if they found it to their advantage.. David had to adapt himself to his position. He was an outlaw and a captain of outlaws; and while his personal influence and his firm rule might cause some degree of order and justice to prevail, the life at Adullam was inevitably a life of rudeness and violence. It was, no doubt, with a view to provide his parents with a quieter refuge than Adullam afforded, that David sent them beyond the Jordan, and secured for them the hospitality of the King of Moab.[1] Meantime at Adullam his unruly followers increased; and David had soon a formidable band, four hundred strong.

69. One of the first exploits of the outlaws greatly increased their credit with the men of Judah. A few miles south of the fortress of Adullam lay the fortified town of Keilah. The Philistines had come up in considerable force, and not only robbed the threshing-floors of the newly harvested grain, but felt strong enough to attack the town of Keilah itself. The news of the attack reached David; and after making careful inquiry of Jehovah by means of the ephod, and receiving all encouragement, he bravely attacked and smote the Philistine besiegers, and saved the town. The people of Keilah welcomed their deliverer; and David would have continued in the place, which was more commodious than Adullam for his growing army, had he not heard that Saul was making great preparations against him. Fearing that his retreat might be cut off, and that in the event of a siege the inhabitants of Keilah might secure themselves by betraying him into Saul's hands, he followed the advice of the sacred oracle, and departed from the town.

[1] What became of David's parents later we are not told. Perhaps they did not live to see their son exalted to the throne.

70. With his company, now increased to six hundred, David betook himself to the southern hill-country of Judah, and to the neighbourhood of Hebron. Here he lived the life of a freebooter captain, roaming from place to place and levying contributions from the surrounding townships. In the pressing need of his situation, it is too probable that the rights of property were often disregarded; and no doubt there were some—the Ziphites, for example—who would willingly have seen the district rid of such high-handed outlaws. Yet, on the whole, David seems to have cultivated friendly relations with the families and townships of Judah. He and his six hundred men gave some return for the blackmail levied in the district, by defending the land from the marauding Amalekite and other tribes, which not infrequently made incursions upon the southern borders; and it is possible that David pursued the same generous method as he did later,[1] and did not forget to reward his friends of Judah by sharing with them any booty he might gain in his more distant expeditions.

71. That David acted with tact and moderation in this period of outlawry, is witnessed by the story of his dealings with the Calebite family. Nabal, a wealthy sheepowner of Maon, who was a member of this clan, was celebrating the feast of sheep-shearing at Carmel,[2] when David sent messengers to him requesting a contribution in return for the protection he had afforded to his herdsmen and flocks. Nabal was little inclined to favour the freebooters, still less to contribute to their support: he returned an insolent answer. David at once ordered his men to arm, and advanced to chastise the man who had defied him; and it would have gone hard with Nabal had it not been for his wife Abigail, who anticipated David's intended vengeance by winning words and a handsome present. Nabal died soon after; and David united the strong family of Caleb to his interests by taking Abigail to wife.

[1] When at Ziklag, 1 Sam. xxx. 26–31.

[2] Modern Kurmul. Ziph, Maon, and Carmel were all on the same plateau, a few miles south of Hebron.

72. So long as David was in the fortress of Adullam, Saul took no active measures against the outlaw; and though he prepared to attack him in Keilah, he abandoned his purpose on hearing of David's withdrawal from that place. But his jealousy allowed him no rest. He made many attempts to discover David's retreat in southern Judah, and to crush what he regarded as a rebellion. David had apparently made himself obnoxious to the neighbouring people of Ziph: they acted the part of traitorous spies, and reported David's whereabouts to the king. The story of Saul's pursuit is told at great length, and in varying traditions. These recount how on one occasion David and his men had a very narrow escape. Hearing that Saul was in close pursuit, they hid themselves among the rugged crags of the wilderness of Maon. Saul advanced so near them that his force rounded one side of the hill when David and his men were descending upon the other. The fugitives would scarcely have escaped capture, had not Saul been turned from the pursuit by the news of a Philistine raid, which required his immediate attention. On a later occasion the story tells how the pursuer came into the power of the pursued, and how David came upon Saul when he was off his guard. David might have put his bitter enemy to death, and was even incited to do so by those who stood by; but he magnanimously refrained. "The Lord forbid," he said, "that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed!" By such a chivalrous act David showed clearly that he had as yet no ambition to substitute himself for Saul on the throne, and that the king's suspicions of him were quite unfounded.

73. David's position in Judah became at length so insecure, that in desperation he decided to pass over to the Philistines. Both as a patriot and as a religious man, he must have hesitated long to take such a step; for the Philistines were the sworn enemies of his country, and to quit the land of Jehovah was in a measure to lose the sense of Jehovah's presence.[1] He seemed,

[1] Cf. 1 Sam. xxvi. 19.

however, to have no alternative; and accordingly he made proposals to King Achish of Gath, which were readily accepted. Achish handed over Ziklag in the south country[1] to David and his followers; and they removed thither with their wives and families. The King of Gath doubtless regarded his new allies as vassals: they were expected to bear arms in the Philistine interest, to give account to the king of their movements, possibly also to pay tribute.

74. That this step was matter of necessity rather than of choice on David's part, was shown by his conduct during the sixteen months of his stay at Ziklag. He was not disloyal at heart to his country; he was, in fact, pursuing a double game. While pretending to be warring with the people of Judah and the allied tribes, the Kenites and Jerahmeelites,—so giving Achish the impression that he was now bound to the Philistine interest,—David really directed his raids against the enemies of Israel farther south, the Amalekites and other hostile tribes. For greater security in this course of deception, he prosecuted these wars with a relentless thoroughness, annihilating whatever hostile bands he encountered, and leaving neither man nor woman alive to report his doings to the King of Gath.

[1] Its position is probably marked by the ruins of Zuhelike, which lie eastward from Gaza.

CHAPTER V.

MOUNT GILBOA.

Paragraphs 75–87.

75. New Advance of the Philistines. 1 Sam. xxviii. 1, 2, xxix.
76. David's Escape from a Dilemma.

77. Burning of Ziklag, and David's Vengeange. 1 Sam. xxx.
78. His triumphant Return.

79. Saul's Consultation of the Witch of Endor. 1 Sam. xxviii. 3–25.

80. Mount Gilboa. 1 Sam. xxxi.

81. The resultant Extension of the Philistine Power.
82. The gracious Deed of the Men of Jabesh-Gilead.

84–87. General Estimate of Saul.

84. General Review.
85. Saul's Life a Failure.
86. Its better Side.
87. David's Judgment to be accepted.

CHAPTER V.

MOUNT GILBOA.

75. **New Advance of the Philistines.**—The Philistines now took advantage of the divided state of Israel to make a united effort to recover their former prestige and power. Summoning all their forces from the various cities, they moved northward in different companies toward Esdraelon and the valley of Jezreel.[1] Among the princes that gathered to the war was Achish, king of Gath. He summoned his vassals in force, and David among the rest. The Israelite outlaw had evidently won the full confidence of Achish; and when David professed, in ambiguous terms, his allegiance, and his willingness to join the Philistine army, he was so thoroughly satisfied with his vassal that he gave him a new appointment as chief of his bodyguard. In the circumstances David felt obliged to accept the honour, and to take the field against his own country. He did so, we may believe, with no light heart, and hoping that God would show him a way out of the dilemma.

76. In fact his deliverance came about in a very simple way. When the forces were being reviewed at Aphek[2]—the rendezvous

[1] The two names are often used indifferently and applied to the entire plain that stretches between the Jordan and the sea above Mount Carmel. Properly speaking, the valley of Jezreel is the eastern portion between Jezreel and the Jordan; while the great Plain to the west, through which the Kishon flows, was later called Esdraelon.

[2] 1 Sam. xxix. 1, 2; cf. iv. 1. Aphek was probably situated in the plain

of the Philistine host—the other lords of the Philistines objected to the presence of David in the army. They knew him only as the champion of their enemies; and they very naturally feared that the man who had once been, as they thought, a traitor, might prove traitor again. In spite of the testimony of Achish in his favour, they insisted that David should return to Ziklag. David made a feint of being insulted by their want of confidence; but he was only too glad to be extricated from a serious difficulty. He took his departure; while the Philistines continued their advance northward, and, entering Esdraelon by the valley of Dothan, took up their position at Shunem, which lay on the north side of the valley, and on the southern declivity of Little Hermon. Saul, who had hastily gathered his forces to meet them, encamped on the opposing ground of Mount Gilboa,—a strong defensive position, from the abutting hills of which he could oversee the hosts of the Philistines.

77. When David returned to Ziklag after three days' hard marching from Aphek, he found the town a smoking heap of ruins. Some roving bands of Amalekites had seized the opportunity given by David's absence to raid the southern territory of Philistia and Judah, and had revenged themselves on David by burning Ziklag, and carrying off the spoil, with all the women and children. Among those carried away were David's two wives, Abigail and Ahinoam. David's followers were loud in lamentation at the unexpected calamity: they even accused their leader of having, by his former cruel treatment of the Amalekites, given cause for such reprisals. David put an end to the mutinous threats of his followers by vigorous action.

of Sharon, where it unites with the valley of Dothan, from which the Plain of Esdraelon could be conveniently reached. The Philistines would naturally be mustered before they had passed far beyond their own borders. The previous mention of Shunem in the Plain of Esdraelon (xxviii. 4) has led many to think of Aphek as situated elsewhere; but section xxviii. 3-25 is probably inserted out of place, its true position being between chaps. xxx. and xxxi.

After inquiring of Jehovah by means of the ephod and receiving an encouraging answer, he at once led his company in pursuit of the marauders. When they arrived at the Wady Besor,[1] his men began to faint with fatigue,—they were already weary with the hard marching from Aphek, and their present expedition demanded haste,—and a large number broke down entirely. David therefore left two hundred of his company to guard the passage at Besor, while he pressed on with the remaining four hundred. Guided by an Egyptian slave whom the Amalekites had left behind in their retreat, David overtook the raiders, and fell upon them as they were feasting and making merry with the spoil they had gathered from Judah and Philistia. The surprise was completely successful. Before darkness set in, David and his four hundred had routed the Amalekite host with immense slaughter: none escaped but four hundred young men,[2] who mounted the camels and fled. The women and children, together with the spoil of Ziklag and other places, were recovered.

78. The victors returned triumphant, their former murmurings being now turned to jubilation at David's success, and at the sight of the spoil.[3] The victorious leader handed over a share of the booty to his company, distributing it equally to those who had fought, and to those who had remained at Besor—thus creating a wise and just precedent. From the rest of the spoil he sent rich presents to all the friendly townships of Judah. He thus made it clear that while he had been obliged to take service with the Philistines, his heart was still with his own people. He was also—designedly or not—serving his own interest for the future, should altered circumstances bring him back to his own land.

[1] Perhaps the Wady es Sheriah, which runs to the sea a few miles below Gaza.

[2] Young men or slaves. These were possibly tending the camels while their masters were feasting; and they may have taken the first opportunity to escape.

[3] Ver. 20 is unintelligible as it stands; but the reference is doubtless to the delight of the people at the sight of the enormous booty.

79. **The Witch of Endor.**—While Saul was awaiting battle at Mount Gilboa, he sought as usual for some indication of Jehovah's mind as to his fate in the coming conflict. He was doubtless all the more eager to obtain guidance because he was seriously alarmed at the numerous and well-ordered hosts of the Philistines, as compared with his own divided and hastily gathered forces. No answer, however, was forthcoming through any of the ordinary channels. Neither dream, nor priestly oracle, nor prophetic word[1] was granted to relieve his anxiety. In his better days Saul had expelled from the land those who practised secret and unhallowed arts, and professed to hold communication with the unknown. In his despair he now had recourse to one of these. On inquiry he learned that there was a woman with a familiar spirit at Endor, beyond Little Hermon (a distance of about twelve miles). To reach her dwelling he had to make a circuit of the Philistine encampment. He disguised himself, and, with only two attendants, made the journey in safety under cover of the darkness. The king wished to remain unknown to the woman; but when he asked her to bring up Samuel, she looked at him[2] more narrowly, and discovered who he was. Having thus given the king this proof of her discernment, she proceeded to describe the spirit that rose at her call; and Saul, convinced by her words that Samuel was before him, bowed himself to the earth. The voice from the grave pronounced his doom, and the coming defeat of his army.[3] The king was

[1] Similar methods of inquiry were common among other nations of antiquity. Homer (*Iliad*, i. 62) tells how, on occasion of a pestilence among the Greeks, Achilles advised, "Let us consult some prophet, or priest, or interpreter of dreams, for dreams also come from Zeus."

[2] Ver. 12, where the true reading is probably that found in some versions of the Septuagint, "When the woman saw Saul." This seems a more likely interpretation than that suggested by others, that the woman recognised Saul by the threatening attitude of the spirit she had invoked, or by the unexpected success of her art.

[3] It is not said that Saul himself saw Samuel. One can imagine that the woman deceived her visitor by the help of a medium, or by making use of ventriloquistic arts. Of course the story itself is evidently told from the

utterly prostrated by the terrible prediction; but was at length induced to rise and take food. He returned to the army at Gilboa with death in his heart, yet resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible. The die was cast against him; but in his later conduct he showed the spirit of Macbeth in a similar case:

> "Arm, arm, and out!—
> If this which he avouches does appear,
> There is nor flying hence, nor tarrying here.
> I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,
> And wish the estate o' the world were now undone.—
> Ring the alarum-bell! Blow wind! come wrack!
> At least we 'll die with harness on our back."

80. **Mount Gilboa.**—On the following day the Philistines left their encampment, and offered battle in the plain. Though the hope and enthusiasm of former days were extinguished, Saul accepted battle with the last energy of despair. The course of the battle is unrecorded; but the result was what might be expected from a hopeless leader and a divided and discouraged army: the Israelites were driven headlong from the field. Among the slain were the three sons of Saul. The king himself was wounded by the pursuing archers, and, fearing to be taken, appealed to his armour-bearer to put him to death. On his refusal he fell upon his own sword and died; and his faithful armour-bearer followed his example. Next day, when the Philistines came back over the battlefield to search for booty and strip the slain, they found the bodies of Saul and his sons. They cut off Saul's head, and sent it along with his armour to their own land, as a trophy to the people and a thank-offering to their gods. His body, and those of his sons, they carried to Bethshan,[1] and hung up on the wall as an insult to Israel.

81. The immediate result of the defeat of Israel was the

common view of antiquity, that sorcerers and witches possessed real power over the unseen world.

[1] Modern Besan, between the field of battle and the Jordan, where the plain of Jezreel descends to the Jordan valley.

extension of Philistine power in the northern regions. The towns in the valley of Jezreel and the neighbourhood were evacuated by the Israelites, and taken possession of by the Philistines.[1] How far they resumed their ancient sway over the southern hill-country and the East Jordan land is not precisely known, but it is probable that they exacted tribute from the tribes of northern Israel, and the territory which had been governed directly by Saul. Thus by one fatal battle Israel was to all outward appearance brought back to the state of vassalage from which it had been delivered. The kingdom which it had been Saul's lifework to establish seemed once more to have collapsed.

82. The loss of such a brave warrior and leader was itself a crushing blow to Israel, and there was sincere lamentation throughout the land. The inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead held their former deliverer in grateful remembrance; and they were so grieved at the insult offered to his bones, that a party of them passed over by night and brought away the bodies of Saul and his sons from the walls of Bethshan. The Jabeshites then buried them with all honour under a sacred tree, and fasted seven days to show their respect for Saul's memory.

83. Nor was it only in northern Israel and the East Jordan land that Saul's loss was mourned. With a generous disregard of past enmity and persecution, David rent his clothes at the tidings of Saul's death, and slew in anger the messenger who brought the unwelcome news.[2] No doubt David was all the more grieved, because the death of Saul was conjoined with the victory of the Philistines, as well as the loss of his lifelong friend Jonathan. The elegy upon Saul and Jonathan, which

[1] Ver. 7, where the corrected rendering is to be preferred, "When the Israelites that were in the cities of the valley (of Jezreel), and they that were in the cities of the Jordan, saw," etc.

[2] The story of the Amalekite who took the credit of Saul's death is probably a later insertion. According to 2 Sam. iv. 10, David slew the messenger simply because of his malicious supposition that the news he brought would be welcome.

excels not only in poetic beauty and taste, but in natural and manly pathos, may possibly have been written by David himself. At any rate it is drawn from one of the oldest collections of national lyrics, and may be taken as expressive of David's appreciation and sorrow:

". . . O Israel, on thy high places are the slain!
Alas, how the mighty are fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.
The curse of drought be upon you, Gilboa!
Let no dew nor rain fall on you, ye hills of death!
For there the shield of the mighty was cast down,
The shield of Saul, the oil-anointed king.
From the blood of the slain,
From the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.
Saul and Jonathan—the beloved and kindly—
In life and in death were not divided;
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you with scarlet. . . .
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
Alas, how the mighty are fallen!
In the midst of the battle Jonathan is slain. . .
I am grieved for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Wonderful was thy love to me,
More than the love of women.
Alas, how the mighty are fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!"

84. **General Estimate of Saul.**—Saul would never have accomplished what he did in founding the monarchy in Israel, had there not been many elements of greatness in his character. He was a brave patriot, and a man of determined energy; and if he never won the enthusiastic love of the people as David did, he was generally esteemed as a clear-sighted and trustworthy leader. Impulsive and passionate, determined in a good cause

as well as headstrong in a bad one, he shared the superstitions and the fierce manners of his age. Simple and hardy in his mode of life, he cared nothing for the usual luxuries of kings. His administration also was of the simplest kind, his royal court being quite primitive and patriarchal. Palace he had none : he had comparatively few State officials : he administered justice while sitting under the sacred tree at Gibeah, lance in hand, and with his soldiers around him. His worst features were his jealousy and constant persecution of David, the self-will which led to his breach with Samuel, his brooding melancholy, and his superstitious recourse to the heathenish arts which he had in his better days suppressed.

85. As we weigh Saul's character, and consider the defects of a career that apparently goes on darkening to the close, we can hardly avoid feeling that such a life was a moral and spiritual failure. Saul was his own worst enemy : the artificer of his own ruin. Failing to exercise a kingly self-control, becoming more and more a prey to self-will, passion, and jealousy, he gradually lost all power to face the responsibilities of his high position. His end on Mount Gilboa, where he took his own life in pride and despair, seems the natural conclusion to such a career.

86. But while we take all warning from such a life with its error and sin, and its tragic termination, we must, here as always, mingle sympathy with our judgment. We cannot forget what Saul accomplished for Israel, and that he first set his nation on the upward paths of progress that culminated in the following reigns. If he did not carry out the higher mission of the prophetic ideal,—the founding of a healthy and progressive religious life in the nation,—he laid the basis for it by founding a kingdom that was destined to last for many centuries ; and thus his work was not wholly in vain. Nor can we believe that the talents he displayed, his courage and energy and patriotic zeal, had no background of moral strength. Some balance must be struck, and some reservations made, even in the best of lives ; and if in this case the balance does not come out in Saul's favour

there are still many noble traits of character, many generous impulses, many moments of religious fervour and of magnanimity, that debar our harsher judgment.

87. It is pleasant to think that David himself, who more than any other suffered from the effects of Saul's passion and spleen, thought tenderly of Saul, and mourned him as a true king, and well worthy of the nation's choice. And, as F. D. Maurice says,[1] it is safe to follow David's example in our judgment of Saul. "We may dwell upon bright and hallowed moments of lives that have been darkened by many shadows, polluted by many sins. . . . As Nature with her old mosses and her new spring foliage hides the ruins which man has made, and gives to the fallen tower and broken cloister a beauty scarcely less than that which belonged to them in their prime,—so human Love may be at work too, 'softening and concealing, and busy with her hand in healing,' the rents which have been made in God's nobler temple, the habitation of His own Spirit. If it were lawful in the old time to cover with love and hope a multitude of transgressions, it cannot be less lawful now that the earth is overshadowed with a mercy that blotteth out iniquity and transgression and sin; when the blood of sprinkling has a mightier voice than that which cries for vengeance; when the atoning sacrifice reveals heights and lengths and depths and breadths of love in which we must rejoice to be lost."

[1] *Prophets and Kings*, p. 34.

CHAPTER VI.

DAVID KING AT HEBRON.

Paragraphs 88–92. THE NEW SITUATION AFTER GILBOA.
2 Sam. ii. 1–11.

88. David returns to Hebron.
89. He is anointed King of Judah.
90. Significance of David's Position.
91. Abner's Activity at Mahanaim.
92. Israel's Loyalty to the Idea of the Monarchy.

93–101. THE CIVIL WAR: DAVID'S GROWING POWER.
2 Sam. ii. 12–v. 5.

93. Outbreak of the Civil War: Joab victorious. 2 Sam. ii. 12–32.
94. David's gradual Success. 2 Sam. iii. 1–5.
95. Abner quarrels with Eshbaal. 2 Sam. iii. 6–11.
96. Abner forms a League with David. 2 Sam. iii. 12–21.
97. Abner is murdered by Joab. 2 Sam. iii. 22–30.
98. David repudiates the Murder. 2 Sam. iii. 31–39.
99. The Murder of Eshbaal. 2 Sam. iv.
100. David recognised King of all Israel. 2 Sam. v. 1–5.
101. Question of the Order of Events.

102–105. NEW WAR OF INDEPENDENCE. 2 Sam. v. 17–25, xxi. 15–22, xxiii. 8–23.

102. New Invasion of the Philistines.
103. David unprepared: Guerilla Warfare.
104. Incidents of the War.
105. The two Battles of Rephaim disastrous to the Philistines.

106. CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM. 2 Sam. v. 6–12.

107. Jerusalem made the Capital of the Kingdom.

CHAPTER VI.

DAVID KING AT HEBRON.

88. **The New Situation after Gilboa.** — One result of the disastrous battle of Gilboa and Saul's death was that it enabled David to extricate himself from his false position, and to return with safety to Judah. Even while in the land of the Philistines David had longed for his old home; and he had prepared the way for his return by keeping in friendly touch with Judah and the allied clans. Ziklag, now in ruins, could no longer be an attractive spot to him; and Saul's death removed the main obstacle to his return. After making inquiry of the oracle of God, he removed with his family and his six hundred retainers to the district of Hebron. No doubt he hoped to obtain the leadership in Judah, and meant to be guided by circumstances in his future relations with the Philistines and with northern Israel.

89. His welcome probably surpassed his expectations. The allegiance of Judah to the house of Saul had never been enthusiastic, and, as may be imagined, was greatly diminished by Saul's tyrannical treatment of their brave fellow-tribesman. In the troubled times prevailing after Saul's death, the old ties of authority were broken, and the men of Judah felt it necessary to institute a new government for themselves. They looked to David as the fittest man to restore order and maintain their cause. Having come to an understanding with other families or

tribes of the south country, the Calebites, the Kenites, the Jerahmeelites, and others, who were all friendly to David, they came together and anointed David king at the ancient capital of Hebron.

90. This step could scarcely be construed as hostile to the Philistines. Probably David had no desire as yet to enter into conflict with his former allies, whose military strength he well knew. It is quite possible that he still retained Ziklag, still remained on friendly terms with Achish of Gath, and recognised himself as the vassal of the Philistines. This supposition would at least explain how the Philistines viewed with unconcern the rise of this petty kingdom, and left the men of Judah at liberty to settle their own affairs. Nor, further, need we suppose that in accepting the kingdom of Judah, David was acting in direct and conscious hostility to the interests of Saul's house. Now that the Philistines occupied the interior of the land, the people of Judah were isolated from their brethren in the north, and left practically to shift for themselves; and David simply took the position which in the circumstances was rendered vacant. Still less have we reason to think that David at this time had more extended ambitions, or regarded his elevation to the headship of Judah as a mere step to the entire sovereignty of Israel. His first act was quite friendly. His message to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, in which he warmly commended their praiseworthy conduct in giving fitting burial to Saul and his sons, and notified them of his election to the leadership of Judah, need not be suspected of any crafty design. It rather revealed the generous spirit of a man whose sympathies were drawn forth by the national humiliation, as well as an honest intention to remain on terms of friendly alliance with the people of northern Israel.

91. Meanwhile Abner, the brave captain of Saul's army, had done what he could in the north to repair the disasters following on the defeat of Mount Gilboa. Retiring with the remnant of his army to Mahanaim in the East Jordan land, he endeavoured to reknit the scattered forces of the nation by proclaiming as

Saul's successor his son Eshbaal (or Ishbosheth).[1] Unfortunately Saul's bravest sons had died in battle, and this new king was a weakling: Abner therefore retained the real power in his own hands. In all probability he further secured his position, and regained some shred of authority over the western tribes by acknowledging the sovereignty of the Philistines.

92. There were thus for a time two kings in Israel, one in the north-east and the other in the south, both, as it would seem, vassals of the Philistines. It is noteworthy that in spite of their disunited and depressed condition, the nation remained loyal to the idea of the monarchy. They did not refer their present calamities to the defects of that institution, or think of going back to the tribal or primitive methods of government. In spite of their late disaster, they had learned to value the monarchy as a strong bulwark of order, and the surest safeguard against foreign oppression. And though circumstances meanwhile divided them into two States, the ideal of a united kingdom was still before their eyes. Saul's work had not entirely failed: only the man was needed to take up the work and carry it to completion. As time went on it became clear that Eshbaal was not the man. There were many already in the north who sympathised with David, and were turning their eyes to the young ruler of Judah as the most fitting successor to Saul.[2]

93. **The Civil War.**—It was apparently not of set purpose on either side that conflict arose between north and south; but rivalry was inevitable, and it suddenly burst into open war. At Gibeon in Benjamin,[3] Abner and Joab, the rival generals,

[1] The name is variously given: Ishbosheth (2 Sam. ii. 8), Ishvi (1 Sam. xiv. 49), and Eshbaal (1 Chron. viii. 33). Similarly the names Meribbaal and Mephibosheth are used interchangeably (1 Chron. viii. 34; 2 Sam. iv. 4). Apparently the name was altered in the reading in order to avoid pronouncing the name of the Canaanitish god Baal; though there can be no doubt that the word Baal in the original name was simply the title of Jehovah as "lord" of Canaan.

[2] 2 Sam. iii. 17.

[3] Now El-Jib, about five miles N.-W. of Jerusalem.

faced one another, each with a considerable following. The purpose of the meeting is not mentioned: it may have been to come to a friendly understanding, or to concert measures against the Philistines. In any case each party was prepared for war or for peace. A sham-fight was proposed by Abner, in which a dozen picked men from either side took part. The dangerous game developed into a bloody contest; and the rival passions being aroused, the play ended in a general engagement. Abner's company was forced back, and took to flight. In the pursuit, Asahel, the youngest brother of Joab, a youth light of foot and anxious to distinguish himself, pressed hard on Abner's heels. Knowing him to be Joab's brother, Abner would fain have spared him, and warned him to desist from following him; but he was at length obliged to slay his pursuer in self-defence. The pursuit was stayed at last by Abner's appeal to Joab to cease the unnatural strife—not, however, till hundreds of men had been slain.

94. Blood now called for blood; and the civil war, begun in a manner so unpremeditated, continued for many years. The editor of Samuel passes it over in almost complete silence: perhaps he had no desire to record the details of such a hateful and inglorious war between brethren. He was content to summarise it in the fact that David's star continued in the ascendant, while Eshbaal's power declined. Probably there were few actual battles; there were certainly none of decisive moment. Abner was sufficiently occupied at Mahanaim, and it was not to David's interest to embrue his hands in the blood of those who, as he now began to hope, might one day be his own subjects. He might well leave the issue to the natural course of circumstances. His best policy was to conciliate the northern tribes, and to give Eshbaal's incompetence time to show itself; and this course he adopted with success. It seems also that during the seven years of his reign at Hebron, David made several matrimonial alliances,—notably with the daughter of the King of Geshur, whose territory lay beyond Mahanaim,—and

thus strengthened his position both in Israel and beyond its borders.

95. The civil war was brought to a conclusion favourable to David by several unforeseen circumstances. Chief among these was Abner's estrangement from Eshbaal, and his defection in consequence from the northern cause. Eshbaal proved his unfitness for government by the way he quarrelled with the general who was the mainstay of his fortunes. It is true he had reasonable ground for suspicion; but he had neither the prudence to be silent, nor the courage to act with decision. In those days it was not uncommon for a king to take over the harem of his predecessor; and when any one took steps in this direction, it was taken as a sign that he was aiming at the kingdom. So, when Abner came under suspicion as to his relations with Rizpah, a former concubine of Saul, Eshbaal naturally regarded it as high treason. He hastily charged Abner with the crime; but he showed his weakness by allowing his general to flout him to his face. Abner replied angrily that if he had meant treason he could ere this have handed over his power and influence to David; and that now, in despite, he would do what Eshbaal feared, to punish him for his ingratitude. Abner thereupon went his way; and the king was neither skilful enough to meet craft with craft, nor decided enough to take the stronger measure of removing Abner from his powerful position.

96. There were already many in the north who favoured David's cause; and the number of these was greatly augmented when it became known that Abner had cast his influence into the scale. Abner came to an understanding with the heads of Israel, and particularly with the Benjamites, who might have been inclined to favour Eshbaal from their tribal connection with Saul's house. He then brought the conspiracy to a head by making overtures to David. David, however, acted with wise caution. While willing to take advantage of the northern league, he delayed matters for a time, and meanwhile demanded of Eshbaal that his former wife, Michal, the daughter of Saul,

should be publicly restored to him. David made this demand, doubtless, out of wise policy. As the husband of Michal he was one of the royal household; and when Saul took her at the time of David's flight and remarried her to Paltiel the Benjamite of Gallim, he acted probably with a view to dissolve the relations of David with his household. The restoration of Michal would reinstate David in the royal family, and enhance his position in the eyes of the northern tribes, giving an air of legitimacy to his claim on Saul's throne. The demand was granted,—another proof of Eshbaal's weakness, and of Abner's overmastering power in the councils of Mahanaim,—and Abner with twenty others was appointed to escort Michal to Judah.[1] The embassy served Abner's end: he could now interview David personally, and concert plans of action with him for the reunion of the kingdoms. David received Abner with all honour; and the new league was approaching completion when a tragedy occurred that threatened to bring about a renewal of strife, and to shatter all the hopes of a peaceful union.

97. Abner had just left the court at Hebron, when Joab and his men returned from a foray. Hearing of the proposals of peace and of Abner's friendly visit, Joab expressed openly before David his suspicions as to Abner's good faith. The very thought of friendship with the man who had slain his brother Asahel excited his indignation. Mindful only of his blood-feud and careless of David's reputation, he hastily sent messengers after Abner to bid him return. The messengers overtook him at the well of Sirah, only a mile or two from Hebron. The two generals met at the gate of the town. Abner had returned without suspicion; but Joab took his rival aside as if to speak with him privately, and taking him unawares treacherously murdered him. The blood of Asahel was thus cruelly avenged.

[1] We may assume, though it is not expressly stated, that Abner's visit to Hebron with Michal (implied in ver. 16) and the visit mentioned in vers. 19, 20 were identical.

98. The murder of Abner was of no advantage to David, but the reverse. He had lost one who was working heartily in his interest, and the manner of his death might seriously alienate the tribes of the north. David felt that the murder would give rise to hateful suspicions, and cast a shadow on his own reputation. He did what he could to dissociate himself from the treachery of Joab. He gave Abner honourable burial: he fasted and put on sackcloth, and wept over Abner's grave. But though he cursed Joab in his heart, and openly expressed abhorrence of the deed, he did not call Joab to account—whether from weakness or from regard to his great and otherwise faithful services; and those who did not know of the league between David and the murdered general might still suspect the king's connivance at his death. David's behaviour in mourning for Abner did much to allay the general suspicion; but it seems unlikely that all doubts were entirely removed.[1]

99. David's cause was more decisively advanced by a second crime that took place at this crisis of affairs. David's prompt repudiation of connivance in Abner's death was generally approved in the north, and the movement in his favour continued. Eshbaal's position became critical. At length two of his captains, Rechab and Baanah, natives of Beeroth in Benjamin, seeing the trend of affairs, resolved to make their own profit out of the situation. One day at noontide, when all was silent in the palace at Mahanaim, and the king himself was taking his rest, they slipped in and slew Eshbaal in his bed. They escaped undetected, and brought the head of their victim to Hebron, hoping for a rich reward from David; but David at once showed his abhorrence of the dastardly deed by putting the murderers to death.[2]

[1] The taunt of Shimei, making David responsible for the blood of Saul's house, referred probably to the murders of Abner and of Eshbaal, as well as to the slaughter of the seven descendants of Saul (2 Sam. xvi. 8, xxi. 5–10).

[2] It is suggested that the two captains were Canaanites (Beeroth being a Canaanitish town), and bore a special ill-will to Saul's house on account of his harsh treatment of their people. But the supposition is scarcely necessary

100. The chief obstacle to David's sovereignty in the north was thus removed, and David at length reaped the reward of his patient and conciliatory policy. Representatives came from all the northern tribes to Hebron, inviting David to assume the kingship over Israel; and David was solemnly anointed once more, and proclaimed king over the reunited State.

101. The broken narrative in Chapter V. leaves considerable doubt as to the actual order of events; but possibly they occurred in close proximity of time, and were even in a measure contemporaneous. The union of Israel with Judah would take a considerable time, and the Philistines would scarcely wait for its consummation before they invaded the land. On the other hand, the prominence given to the stronghold of Adullam as the centre of David's operations in his earlier wars with the Philistines (2 Sam. v. 17), indicates that Jerusalem was not yet in David's hands. We may take it that the conquest of Jerusalem was achieved in some interval of the Philistine war, and, if not previous to the anointing at Hebron, placed the seal upon that act, and fully established David's authority over the united kingdom.[1]

102. **New War of Independence.**—For some years the Philistines had remained inactive. So long as their sovereignty was recognised and the annual tribute paid (probably by both parties), they were quite content to see the Israelites consume one another in a fratricidal conflict. But the present movement for union they regarded in a different light. It was evidently a

to account for the treacherous deed. They were probably aware of Abner's conspiracy, and encouraged by the knowledge; though it is altogether improbable that this cowardly murder was part of the common programme.

[1] Certainly the narrative in 2 Sam. v. 17–25 finds its natural place before ver. 6, since it evidently recounts what took place previous to the taking of Jerusalem. We are thus obliged to take the events in the following order: (1) Judah's union with Israel (2 Sam. v. 1–5); (2) opening war with the Philistines (vers. 17–25); (3) the capture of Jerusalem (vers. 6–12).

first step to independence; and they could scarcely doubt that when David had established his authority over a united kingdom, he would turn his arms against them, and endeavour to put an end to their domination. Fearing for their supremacy, they resolved to be beforehand with David; and without much warning they poured their forces into the land of Judah, and encamped in the Valley of the Giants (Rephaim), in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.[1] They took Bethlehem, and fortified it with a garrison (2 Sam. xxiii. 14). It is possible that the Jebusites, the Canaanitish people of Jerusalem, were favourable to the invading Philistines, and allowed them to use Jerusalem as a basis of operations.

103. David seems to have been taken unawares: he was not prepared for the invasion, and still required time to gather his forces in the new and scarcely organised kingdom. He retired therefore to the stronghold of Adullam,[2] and apparently remained there for some time, waiting for reinforcements, and contenting himself meanwhile with occasional raids and surprises. In such skirmishes the men of Judah would generally have the advantage of the ground, which was not well adapted for troops in heavy armour; and David's men were more thoroughly acquainted with the hills and ravines. David himself also had, from his former experience at Gath and Ziklag, become fully acquainted with Philistine tactics, and knew both the strong and the weak points of the enemy's mode of warfare.

104. The progress of this war cannot be clearly followed, as the story lies before us only in fragmentary narratives. It was

[1] Its more precise position is not easy to determine. It is usually located southward from Jerusalem in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem (cf. xxiii. 13, 14); but the mention of Gibeon as the starting-point of David's second battle seems rather to indicate a locality northward of Jerusalem. Yet the Philistine forces may have been widely scattered, or David may have made a wide circuit—even as far as Gibeon—to meet the northern forces coming to his aid.

[2] The expression "went down to the hold" (2 Sam. v. 17) is not suitable to the citadel of Zion. The corresponding narrative (xxiii. 13, 14) proves that the stronghold of Adullam is meant.

a war of heroic adventures and mighty exploits. It is possible that some of the stories told of David's mighty men—like that of the slaughter of the four giants of Gath[1]—should be referred to a later period; but one story that has been inserted in the appended chapters of 2 Samuel is clearly referable to this time. On one occasion David was reconnoitring near Bethlehem, where the Philistine garrison was posted; some of the enemy's troops were standing on the alert outside the gate. He felt parched with thirst. It was the time of harvest, and of the summer heats when the torrents were dried up and water was scarce. David remembered the time when, as a shepherd lad tending his father's flocks, he had refreshed himself in the hot summer days by taking long deep draughts at the well by the gate of Bethlehem. The recollection awoke in him a longing to have his thirst once more quenched from the same cool spring. "Oh," he murmured, "if one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" His desire became known; and three of his braves resolved to satisfy it. Reckless of the danger, they crossed over to the enemy's outposts, beat off those who opposed them, and made straight for the well. Having drawn the water, they again burst a passage through the Philistines that intercepted them, and returned to David in triumph. The way in which the king showed his appreciation of the deed proved that the heroic devotion of his mighty men was not misplaced. David was pleased with their devotion, but he held the lives of his men dear, and could not approve of their exposing themselves for such a trifling cause. The water they presented to him was too sacred for ordinary use: he could not drink it, for that would be like drinking "the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives." He poured it out as a drink-offering before the Lord.

105. With heroes like these, and with such a leader, all things were possible; and at length David succeeded in driving

[1] 2 Sam. xxi. 15–22.

back the Philistines from the land. Twice he and his men faced them in the Valley of Rephaim, and twice he drove them before him. The second victory was complete: making a circuit, he fell upon the enemy's rear and totally routed them, pursuing them to their own borders.

106. **Capture of Jerusalem.**—Having thus, for the time being, cleared the land of invaders, David still further secured his position in the united kingdom by the conquest of Jerusalem. Hitherto Judah had been separated from the northern tribes by a long strip of terrritory, extending from Jerusalem in the east to Gezer in the west, and occupied largely by Canaanites, who were more or less self-governing and independent of Israel. Of the towns in this district, Jerusalem, held by the Jebusites, was the chief stronghold. It is possible, as we have already remarked, that the Jebusites were in alliance with the Philistines; and it may have been owing to their reliance on their allies' assistance as well as on the natural strength of their fortress, that they spoke so contemptuously of David's project of besieging it. Their haughty declaration that their citadel could be maintained against such besiegers by the blind and the lame, was thrown back in their teeth by David,[1] as he and his men mounted the walls of the fortress, and cast the defenders headlong from their battlements.

107. The conquest of Jerusalem was the crowning achievement of David's early wars; and it was followed by the adoption of the city as the new capital of the united kingdom. This was a wise step of policy. Standing on the borders of Judah and Benjamin, Jerusalem was the natural centre of the kingdom, while its admirable situation from a military point of view gave it additional importance. Hebron lay too far south to serve as the natural centre of the new State; and doubtless the northern Israelites would look with favour on a capital which they had helped to found, and which had more than merely

[1] 2 Sam. v. 8 has a mutilated text; but so much of the meaning is clear.

tribal associations. David therefore acted wisely in transferring his court thither; and he immediately proceeded to strengthen its fortifications, and to build a royal residence in the citadel. On three sides Jerusalem was guarded from attack by deep valleys; and on the north David strengthened the old Jebusite ramparts. With the help of skilled Tyrian workmen he built his palace in the strongest part of the city, the citadel of Mount Zion.[1]

[1] The topography of ancient Jerusalem has many difficulties. The indications of the Bible favour the view that the citadel of the Jebusites which became Mount Zion, the city of David, was situated on the eastern hill, south of the later temple-area. It remains uncertain whether the western hill was also inhabited by the Jebusites; but we may well believe in any case that the new influx of Israelites would soon render the extension necessary.

CHAPTER VII.

DAVID KING AT JERUSALEM.

Paragraphs 108–110. DAVID'S RELIGIOUS POLICY. 2 Sam. vi.

108. The Lack of a visible Religious Centre.
109. Transference of the Ark to the Capital.
110. Why David did not build a Temple.

111–118. DAVID'S WARS. 2 Sam. viii. 1–14, x. 1–xi. 1, xii. 26–31.

111. A warrior King for a warring Age.
112. War with the Philistines. 2 Sam. viii. 1; 1 Chron. xviii. 1.
113. War with Moab. 2 Sam. viii. 2, xxiii. 20.
114. War with Ammon. 2 Sam. x. 1–14.
115. War with Syria. 2 Sam. viii. 3–12, x. 15–19.
116. Capture of Rabbah. 2 Sam. xi. 1, xii. 26–31.
117. Conquest of the Edomites. 2 Sam. viii. 13–14; 1 Kings xi. 14–17.
118. Issue of these Wars.

119–120. DAVID'S ADMINISTRATION. 2 Sam. viii. 15–18, xx. 23–26.

119. In Military Matters.
120. In other Matters.

121–134. DOMESTIC HISTORY.

(*a*) 122. DAVID'S FALL. 2 Sam. xi. 2–27.
123. The Judgment following. 2 Sam. xii. 1–25.
124. David's Sin a Root of further Troubles.
(*b*) 125–132. THE FIRST INSURRECTION. 2 Sam. xiii.–xix. 8.
125. Its Roots in family and civil Dissensions.
126. David's Treatment of Saul's Household. 2 Sam. ix., xxi. 1–14.
127. Judah's Jealousy of northern Israel.
128. Absalom's sudden Insurrection at Hebron. 2 Sam. xiii.–xv. 12.
129. David flees from Jerusalem. 2 Sam. xv. 13–29.
130. Incidents of the Flight. 2 Sam. xv. 30–xvi. 14.
131. Absalom in Jerusalem. 2 Sam. xvi. 15–xvii.
132. The Battle of Mahanaim: the Rebels crushed. 2 Sam. xviii. 1–xix. 8.
(*c*) 133. A SECOND INSURRECTION. 2 Sam. xix. 9–xx. 2.
134. Quelled by Joab. 2 Sam. xx. 4–22.

135–140. CLOSING DAYS OF DAVID'S REIGN. 1 Kings i.–ii. 11.

135. Question of the Succession.
136. Solomon made King.
137. David prepares for Death.
138. His last Charge to Solomon.
139. The terrible Codicil.
140. Question of its Authenticity.

141–142. DAVID'S CHARACTER.

143. The ideal King of after Ages.

CHAPTER VII.

DAVID KING AT JERUSALEM.

108. **Religious Policy.**—David had now established himself as king over a united people. By his tactful address and forbearance, by his winning personality, and above all by his successful war against the Philistines, he had healed all tribal animosities, and won the heart of the whole nation. By his wise adoption of Jerusalem as the national capital, he had given a new centre to the national life and the growing patriotic sentiment. But as yet nothing had been done to unite the religious sentiments of Israel. Although Jehovah was the God of all the tribes, and His worship an abiding link of union through all times of anarchy and division, there was no visible religious centre. The religious aspirations gathered round certain local shrines and high places, where the people of the neighbourhood assembled for sacrifice and festival; and as each tribe held its own sanctuaries in highest honour, there was always the recurring danger that Jehovah might be confounded with some local Baal, and His national character forgotten. In earlier times this danger was to some degree averted, and the need for some national expression of religion met, by the worship connected with the sacred Ark of Jehovah. This ancient emblem of the Divine presence belonged to no one tribe: it was the palladium of the nation, the symbol of its past unity, and the pledge of its future continuance as a united religious people. For a considerable

time, however, this symbol of the national faith had lain neglected and forgotten at Kiriath-jearim.[1]

109. As a pious follower of Jehovah, in whose name he had united the tribes of Israel and achieved the liberation of his country, David felt it incumbent on him to encourage the national worship, and to set his people an example of devotion. He therefore resolved to make Jerusalem the religious as well as the political centre of Israel, and to give his capital a further consecration by restoring the Ark to its ancient honour, and placing it in the citadel. The story of the transference (2 Sam. vi.) indicates the great reverence and fear felt for the sacred shrine. With a great company representative of all Israel, David proceeded to Kiriath-jearim. The Ark was brought forth with all solemnity and placed upon a new cart drawn by oxen. A vast procession was formed, and took its way to Jerusalem, headed by a band playing all manner of instruments. But a terrible accident happened. Whether by the roughness of the road or the restiveness of the oxen, the cart holding the Ark was shaken ; and Uzzah, one of the drivers, fearing for the Ark's safety, laid hold of it. The story goes that he was struck dead on the spot for his irreverence. David was so shocked and terrified by this mark of the Divine displeasure, that he was afraid to carry out his purpose. He caused the Ark to be conveyed to the house of Obed-Edom, a Philistine of Gath, who loyally accepted the charge. Three months later, on learning that Obed-Edom's household was blessed by the presence of the sacred shrine, David recovered from his fear, and resolved to carry out his first intention. This time the Ark was borne on the shoulders of the priests, and sacrifices were offered as the procession started. The hill of Zion was ascended with triumphal

[1] 1 Sam. vi. The town where the Ark lay for about a century is there named Kiriath-jearim, here (2 Sam. vi. 2) Baale Judah. It was otherwise named Baalah and Kiriath-baal (Josh. xv. 9, 60). It is usually identified with Kuriet 'Enab, eight or nine miles north-east of Bethshemesh (Ain Shems), which lay on Judah's western border ; but Conder and others place it at 'Erma, which lies closer to Bethshemesh.

dance and song, David himself taking the lead, and by the exuberance of his zeal earning the contempt and reproach of his wife Michal. The Ark was deposited in the tent prepared for it near the royal residence on Zion; and the ceremony was concluded with sacrifices and burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and the distribution of largess to the people. Zadok and Abiathar were appointed as chief priests in charge of the Ark and of the sacrificial service in Jerusalem.

110. One might naturally have expected that David would erect a more permanent building for the accommodation of the Ark. Various reasons have been given for the postponement of the work. According to one account, David was about to proceed with the building of the temple, but was hindered by the prophet Nathan, who declared in Jehovah's name that such a thing was neither commanded nor desired: Jehovah had dwelt hitherto in a tent, and wished for no other abode (2 Sam. vii. 5–7).[1] According to another (1 Chron. xxii. 8, xxviii. 3), David was not permitted to build the temple, because he was a man of war, and had shed much blood. But the most natural and entirely sufficient reason is that given by Solomon later (1 Kings v. 3), that David his father was not able to build a house to the Lord, because of the many wars he had to wage on every side. In other words, David had not sufficient leisure, and possibly he had not sufficient material in money and skill and command of labour to build a temple worthy of Jehovah, or adequate to his own ideal. What he could do he did: he consecrated to the treasury of Jehovah a great part of the silver and gold acquired in war, and so made it possible for his successor to carry through the work successfully.

111. **David's Wars.**—The circumstances of David's time called for strenuous action. None but a man of war could have made his way to the throne of Israel; and only a warrior-king could

[1] The speech of Nathan bears this meaning on the face of it. Ver. 13 seriously disturbs the sense, and was doubtless added by a revising hand.

have maintained himself on it. The new kingdom had to be defended on all sides from enemies who were jealous of its growing power. In this task David was signally successful. With a united people and a well-tried army he was in a position to cope with all his enemies; and his wars of defence passed speedily into wars of conquest.

112. His first enemy apparently was *Philistia*. Though already on several occasions defeated and driven to their own borders, the Philistines were by no means subdued: they probably hoped still to repair their losses, and to regain their hold over the land of Israel. We have no account of these later campaigns; but the war was completely successful, and ended in David's capture of Gath.[1] But though the power of the Philistines was broken, David did not proceed to extremities: he was satisfied to receive their tribute, and seems henceforth to have stood on good terms with them. Many loyal Philistines served David in his wars; and his bodyguard—the Cherethites and Pelethites—was mainly composed of Philistine mercenaries.

113. David then turned his attention to the east, and entered into conflict with *Moab* and *Ammon*. We do not know the cause of the Moabite war. The Moabites had been friendly with David in his outlaw days;[2] but now that David was king, the old question of Moab's boundaries[3] may have been revived, or some new difference may have arisen; and quarrels between former friends are often very deadly. The war was evidently prosecuted with great bitterness and persistence on both sides; and there were some notable exploits on the part of David's mighty men.[4] When David at length triumphed over his foes,

[1] 2 Sam. viii. 1; 1 Chron. xviii. 1. The reading in the former passage is evidently corrupt.

[2] 1 Sam. xxii. 3. 4. Possibly David could trust to the friendship of Moab at that time, because of Moab's hostility to Saul (xiv. 47).

[3] At one time the Moabites held possessions north of the Arnon (Num. xxi. 26, xxii. 1).

[4] Cf. the exploit of Benaiah in 2 Sam. xxiii. 20, which may be referred to this war.

he took very severe measures: he put two-thirds of his prisoners of war to death, and made the whole land tributary.

114. The war with Ammon continued for a much longer time, and brought David into conflict with the Syrians of the north. The occasion of the war is stated at length. David had sent ambassadors to Hanun, the new king of Ammon, to sympathise with him on his father's death, and to congratulate him on his accession to the throne. Hanun's suspicions were roused: he treated the messengers as spies, and sent them back with their beards half-shaved, and their long robes cut off to the middle. Such treatment was a dire insult to Orientals,[1] and was virtually a declaration of war. But Hanun did not feel equal to the conflict alone: he hired the Syrians from Beth-Rehob, Zobah, Maacha,[2] and Tob to come to his assistance. David sent Joab with an army to invade Ammon. Joab met the allied forces before Rabbah, but at first was out-manœuvred: the Ammonites faced him in front while the Syrians pressed upon him in the rear. The situation was extremely critical; but Joab acted with courage and promptitude. Dividing his troops, he despatched his brother Abishai with one half of the army against the Ammonites, while he himself, turning back upon the Syrians, forthwith attacked them and put them to flight. Thereupon the Ammonites gave way before Abishai, and retreated into their city; while the victorious general returned to Jerusalem in triumph.

115. The war, however, was not yet ended: all *Syria* was put in motion to avenge the defeat at Rabbah, and the Ammonites

[1] "Cutting off a person's beard is regarded by the Arabs as an indignity equal to flogging and branding among ourselves. Many would rather die than have the beard shaved off" (D'Arvieux, *Customs of the Bedouin Arabs*).

[2] Probably all the districts mentioned lay southward from Damascus: Beth-Rehob farthest to the east, Maacha south of Hermon, and Zobah in the country intermediate. Tob is also mentioned in the passage (2 Sam. x. 6), a land bordering on Ammon (cf. Judg. xi. 3); but there is probably some confusion in the text. Some have suggested the reading, "the King of Maacha, Ish-Tob, 12000 men," taking Ish-Tob as a name. This, however, would require a further revision in x. 8, where Tob is again mentioned.

still defied David in their capital. David himself took the field against the Syrians, defeated Hadadezer and his allies at Helam, —an unknown locality in the East Jordan land,—and when the Syrians of Damascus came to his assistance, defeated them also with great slaughter. These victories greatly added to David's reputation in the north; and Tou (or Toi), king of Hamath,[1] Hadadezer's adversary in war, sent his son to David with magnificent presents to congratulate him on his victories, and to solicit his friendship. David returned to Jerusalem with great spoil; and for some time the Syrians paid tribute to the King of Israel.[2]

116. The honour of subduing the Ammonites fell to Joab. He laid siege to their capital of Rabbah; and, having cut off the water-supply by seizing the lower city—the "city of waters" as distinct from the "city" or citadel—he finally took the place by storm. With that the war came to an end, for the other cities of Ammon speedily submitted. David despoiled Rabbah of its treasures, laid a heavy tax on the land, and reduced multitudes of the Ammonites to severe servitude.[3]

117. Similar success attended David's arms in the south, where he made a complete conquest of the *Edomites*. After gaining a bloody victory in the Valley of Salt, Joab and his army continued for half a year in their land till all the male population was slain. Only one of the princes of Edom, Hadad, escaped the exterminating sword: he fled to Egypt—to reappear later in Solomon's time. Edom became a province of David's kingdom; and Elath and Eziongeber on the Red Sea became Israelitish seaports.

[1] Not Hamath-Rabbah on the Orontes, but more probably Hamath-Zobah (2 Chron. viii. 3).

[2] 2 Sam. x. 15–19 is to be supplemented by 2 Sam. viii. 3–12, which seems to be a varying account of the same course of conquest.

[3] The translation of 2 Sam. xii. 31 is exceedingly doubtful. It might mean that David put the Ammonites to death with barbarous torture. But this is not historically credible; for even if David was capable of such cruelty (cf. his treatment of the Moabites), he was afterward served loyally by some of the Ammonites (2 Sam. xvii. 27).

118. Thus David was invariably successful in his wars, and extended his kingdom in every direction. The Philistines in the west were thoroughly subdued: across the Jordan, Ammon and Moab were made tributary; and while the Syrians in the north acknowledged his power, his kingdom was extended southward as far as the Red Sea and the borders of Egypt. The growing kingdom advanced to the zenith of its power, and a new era of national prosperity began. David had gathered great spoil in these wars, and annual tribute poured into his treasury. Israel increased in numbers and in prosperity, and with the growing resources of the State the authority of the king was not only assured, but greatly enlarged.

119. **David's Administration.** — In the administration of this growing State it was of the first necessity that the military department should be thoroughly organised. David would scarcely have been able to carry on war so continuously and successfully, had his army remained on the old footing. It appears that from the beginning David had maintained something like a small standing army. The men who had followed him as freebooters in his days of outlawry continued with him when he became king, forming the six hundred or more "mighty men" who constantly attended him, and from whom he selected his generals and captains for the national army. To this company doubtless belonged the "Thirty" heroes, who formed a kind of Legion of Honour in the army. Among or besides this company of "Gibborim," David had a considerable number of foreign mercenaries, who followed him for gain or glory, but who were also at times conspicuous for their loyalty: such as the Cherethites and Pelethites—Philistines probably, who, like the Scotch and Swiss guards of the French kings, formed the king's foreign bodyguard —or Ittai's band of soldiers from Gath.[1] These companies

1 The details regarding David's standing force are exceedingly obscure, especially as the text—as in 2 Sam. xv. 18, xx. 7—is not quite assured. But it seems most probable that the term "Gibborim" had now a wider and

formed together a considerable standing force. They served as the nucleus of the great national army or "host," composed of the able-bodied men of Israel, who were summoned as they were required, and set under captains of hundreds and captains of thousands, under the general command of Joab. It may have been with a view to regulate the number of troops to be requisitioned from the various tribes that David made a census of the people—a proceeding which was viewed with such alarm by a conservative nation, that the ensuing pestilence was regarded as a Divine judgment.[1]

120. While thus providing for the necessities of war, David also used his growing powers for the further regulation of civil and religious affairs. He appointed new officials of government to assist him in "executing judgment and justice" throughout the land; and by their means the royal power was extended much more effectively over the tribes than had been hitherto possible. Not that there was anything like the organisation of a modern State, with its innumerable departments of government. The various towns and districts were still left largely to regulate their own affairs in matters of justice or of religion: the royal interference was only slight and occasional. Thus Zadok and Abiathar[2] were David's high priests in Jerusalem; but we do not hear of their authority being extended to the various sanctuaries and high places throughout the land: still less do we hear of any national religious organisation. Matters of justice, too, were administered by the elders of the towns and the princes of the tribes, though appeals might occasionally be brought before David's seat of justice. David's court, albeit enlarged,

now a more restricted use, and that the Cherethites and Pelethites were that special division of David's standing force which served under Benaiah's leadership as the king's bodyguard.

[1] 2 Sam. xxiv.

[2] 2 Sam. xx. 25. The mention of "Ahimelech the son of Abiathar" in viii. 17 scarcely agrees with the fact that Abiathar was only later removed from the post by Solomon. The reading should be, "Abiathar the son of Ahimelech" (cf. 1 Sam. xxii. 20). David's sons are also mentioned as priests in the list of David's officials.

was still of the simplest character. He had his Recorder or prime minister—Jehoshaphat; his Scribe or chief secretary of state—Seraiah or Sheva: together with other "friends" or counsellors, such as Ahitophel, Hushai, and Chimham,[1] who had an official position at court. With these as well as his seers—Nathan and Gad—and his chief priests and generals, David took counsel; but their chief duty was to carry out his behests. The only officers of government who had large power in their hands—a power not always easy to revoke—were David's generals. The others were quite subordinate officials, and exercised their functions only when the king desired their assistance. The king's will was still the direct law for the nation.

121. **Domestic History.**—We come now to David's domestic history, which forms a sad contrast to his brilliant achievements in war, and to the general wisdom and justice of his government. The story is here told at great length, and presents David in quite a different aspect, revealing him to us in all his sins and weaknesses.

122. There was no high standard of marriage in those early days; and it was especially customary for Oriental kings to have many wives and concubines. The interests of the kingdom were often consulted in contracting a foreign marriage; but apart from such considerations the custom of polygamy widely prevailed, and the king held it as his right to choose the fairest among the daughters of the land. David was no exception to the rule. He had at least six wives at Hebron, and many more were added later to his harem: the names of seventeen sons are mentioned.[2] The polygamy might be excused; but David committed a much more grievous sin by his adultery with Bathsheba, the daughter of one of his mighty men, and the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one

[1] 2 Sam. xv. 12, 37 and xix. 37.

[2] 2 Sam. iii. 2–5, v. 13–16. The Book of Chronicles gives nineteen names; but probably two are reduplications. The number of daughters is not given: only Tamar is mentioned.

of David's heroes.[1] To secure himself against public odium, David tried one expedient after another, and finally he sent secret orders to Joab, who was then besieging Rabbah, to set Uriah in the forefront of the battle and leave him to perish. Joab made no scruple of obeying the king: to a man whose own hands were stained with the blood of murder, the life of one man was probably of small account. Uriah was appointed with other valiant men to meet the Ammonites who had made a sortie from the town; and he was among those who died a soldier's death. When David was informed of the slight repulse before the walls of Rabbah, and of Uriah's death, he acted the part of a magnanimous prince, and sent to Joab the public message, "Let not this thing grieve thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city and overthrow it." Thereafter David took Bathsheba into his palace as soon as the days of mourning for her husband were ended, and she became his wife.

123. Many of those who surrounded David's throne might have viewed the double crime as an unfortunate incident of the harem, a private slip of little account in a career otherwise unsullied and glorious. To Nathan, the prophet and friend of David, it was much more. To him it was a black sin, revealing more of the real David than a hundred victories, and tarnishing all the glory of his former achievements. While David was hugging the assurance that his dark deeds were unknown, or that in any case no one would dare to charge him with them, Nathan was ushered into his presence. He had a tale of injustice to bring to the king's notice,—a tale of a poor man's lamb, which his rich neighbour had seized by violence. It was a case requiring restitution and justice from a king who bore not the sword in vain. Nobly did the king respond to the call: he solemnly swore that the mean aggressor should die, and restore the lamb fourfold. David was quite unprepared for the con-

[1] Bathsheba was probably a granddaughter of Ahitophel, the counsellor of David, and later one of his bitterest enemies (2 Sam. xxiii. 34).

science-thrust that followed : "Thou art the man." As Nathan put before him the enormity of his sin, his black ingratitude to God, and his base murder of Uriah, and declared that he had pronounced his own judgment, David quailed. He sincerely confessed his sin. Nathan thereupon announced to him that while his sin was forgiven, the punishment could not be wholly averted ; he must still reap as he had sown. For the sin a man commits will plague him and others long after it has been confessed and pardoned : the natural consequences remain unaltered, and other punishments may be needed to clear away the moral stain. In David's case the punishment came in the death of the child, in the deplorable feuds of his family, and in the revolt of Absalom. He must still pass through the hard school of adversity, in order to learn that the merciful Jehovah is also just : to have his pride of royalty swept away, and the foolish creed that a king is above the common law of God. The stain of sin is deep and abiding ; it can only be gradually cleansed away. We must think of David henceforth as a weak man slowly regaining moral health and purity : battling painfully with the evil of his heart and private life ; and learning by the calamities that fell upon him, blow after blow, to throw himself more unreservedly upon God, and to arrogate less power to the might of his own arm. Whether David wrote the 51st Psalm or not, the sentiments there expressed have their roots in such an experience as his, and indicate the cries of a true heart, under the Divine discipline : "Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me. . . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

124. In spite of David's repentance, there is no evidence that he entirely cleansed himself from his sin. The dregs of it still remained in the peculiar favour with which he treated Bathsheba ; and when another son was born to her after the death of the first, he was treated with special indulgence by a fond father. He

swore to Bathsheba that this son—Solomon was his name—should be his successor on the throne. It is quite possible that this marked preference had a connection with the rebellion of Absalom, no less than with that of Adonijah ; for both of these sons had prior claims to the throne.

125. **The first Insurrection.**—Darker days were now at hand for Israel, in which family dissensions united with old tribal feuds, and threatened for a time to overwhelm the king and bring the prosperity of the State to an end. David was a wise king : he discerned the signs of the times, and the slumbering tribal jealousies that hindered the stability of his kingdom. By transferring his capital to Jerusalem, and, making it the centre of a just and impartial government, he had sought to secure the confidence of the nation as a whole, and to remove possible grounds of disaffection. But the perfect union of north and south could only come with time ; and the jealousies which had ripened during the past centuries of separation were not easily removed even by impartial government.

126. There was one part of David's conduct in particular which may have awakened the suspicion and ill-will of the northern tribes—his treatment of the remaining members of Saul's household. How far David was actuated by political motives in the matter, it is impossible to say ; but it is only too probable that those who were ready to suspect the king of cunning and cruelty would have their suspicions confirmed. His treatment of the lame Mephibosheth,[1] Jonathan's son, whom he kept at his court, and to whom he restored the lands and possessions of Saul, might be construed by the envious as an act of jealous precaution rather than of real generosity. His conduct to the other members of Saul's family might well raise darker suspicions. On the occasion of a famine caused by three years' bad harvests, the oracle declared that God was angry on account of Saul's cruel repression of the Canaanites of Gibeon. By way of propitiation, David

[1] The name was probably Meribbaal ; cf. note on p. 81.

handed over seven of Saul's family to the Gibeonites, who offered them as a bloody sacrifice to Jehovah. The horrid tale of superstition is somewhat relieved by the story of Rizpah, the mother of two of the victims, who watched day and night for weeks over the bodies, driving off the birds and beasts of prey, till David at last was constrained to give them honourable burial. Although David probably acted in this matter from motives of stern religious conviction, the fact of such a slaughter of Saul's sons could scarcely fail to tell heavily against him, and tend to keep alive the lingering discontent in the north, where the name of Saul was still revered.

127. We must look to the south, however, for the beginnings of the insurrectionary movement; for the men of Judah were certainly the ringleaders, and the first to give Absalom support. Perhaps the very impartiality of David's government was an offence in their eyes: they may have expected David to show special favour to his own tribesmen, whose early loyalty had assisted his elevation to the throne of united Israel. The prevalence of such a feeling in Judah, combining with certain elements of disaffection in the north, can alone account for the surprising success of Absalom when he raised the standard of rebellion at Hebron.

128. The story of the insurrection, which is told with great detail so far as Absalom personally is concerned, gives a sad picture of the evils consequent on the harem system, and of the weaknesses of a too indulgent father. Amnon, the heir to the throne, having wronged Tamar, the full sister of Absalom, that headstrong youth took the law into his own hands, and had Amnon treacherously murdered. He had to flee the country in consequence; but after three years' stay with Talmai, king of Geshur—his grandfather—David was persuaded by a wary device of Joab to permit him to return. Two years later he was fully reinstated in the king's favour. The reconciliation, however, was more apparent than genuine; for Absalom immediately began to plot against his father. With the death of Amnon, Absalom

had become the oldest living member of David's family,[1] and thus the heir-presumptive to the throne; and it may have rankled in his mind that David showed intentions of passing him by in favour of Solomon, the son of Bathsheba (1 Kings i. 30). He proceeded to undermine the king's authority, and to ingratiate himself with the people by all the arts of display and flattery. He drew to his side Ahitophel, the king's counsellor, and carefully fanned every flame of discontent throughout the land. When the conspiracy was ripe, he departed for Hebron with a great following, under pretence of a sacred vow. There the mask was thrown off, and Absalom was publicly proclaimed king.

129. The rebellion was so unexpected and apparently so widespread, that David was quite unprepared; and in the first confusion of panic, distrusting even the people of Jerusalem, he saw nothing for it but to quit the capital. He had, however, many evidences of loyalty even in this hour of humiliation. His bodyguard of Cherethites and Pelethites remained faithful, and probably saved the king's life. The sons of Zeruiah were loyal as ever, and followed with what men they could collect: Ittai of Gath and his band also stood true, and insisted on following the king. Zadok and Abiathar, too, brought out the Ark with the intention of accompanying the king in his flight; but David ordered the sacred shrine to be taken back to its place.

130. If David's courage somewhat failed him in this emergency, his natural prudence soon returned to him. He sent back Hushai, his confidential adviser, to Jerusalem, that he might profess allegiance to Absalom, and outwit if possible the counsels of Ahitophel. The painful incident of the cursing of Shimei, who charged David with the destruction of Saul's house, served to illustrate David's dignity of character. He allowed the man to curse and cast stones without hindrance, saying that the Lord had bidden him; and later, on the day of his triumphant return

[1] Absalom was David's third son; but as there is no further mention of the second son,—Chileab or Daniel,—we may suppose that he died young.

to Jerusalem, when Shimei came cringing before him, he gave him a full pardon.

131. While David was making good his escape to the Jordan, Absalom entered Jerusalem in triumph. Had he set out immediately in pursuit of David, it might have gone hard with the king ; but instead of following Ahitophel's advice and sending twelve thousand men forthwith after the fugitives, he adopted Hushai's plan of delay, given in David's interest. David had thus time to escape to Mahanaim, and to gather his forces together. Ahitophel was so mortified at the rejection of his counsel, and so convinced that the delay would prove disastrous to the cause, that he returned to his own house and deliberately hanged himself.

132. Absalom at length crossed the Jordan with a large army under the leadership of Amasa, a cousin of Joab. But the delay, which enabled him to advance to the attack with increased forces, had been still more profitable to David, who was now well prepared for the conflict. In the battle that followed, not far from Mahanaim, David's army was victorious : there was a great slaughter of the enemy both in the battle and in the later pursuit through an adjoining wood. The carnage would have been even greater, had not Joab out of compassion restrained the victors. He himself, however, thought it wise to get rid of Absalom : he was not deterred by the king's earnest injunction to all his captains to spare the prince. Absalom was found entangled in his flight by his long hair, which caught in a tree ; and as he hung suspended in mid-air Joab pierced him through to the heart. David was so overwhelmed by the death of his son, that he almost forgot his victory in his grief ; and it was only after Joab's sharp remonstrance that he was persuaded to welcome the victorious army at the gates of Mahanaim.

133. **The second Insurrection.**—The civil war would now have been at an end, had not the circumstances of David's return to his capital created fresh troubles. Absalom being dead and his forces scattered, the heart of the rebellion was crushed, and

the people of Israel discussed the advisability of welcoming the king back to his kingdom. For a time Judah kept sullenly aloof from these negotiations; and David had to take special means to win them over. He got Zadok and Abiathar the priests to use their influence with the men of Judah: he went so far as to offer Amasa, who had acted as Absalom's general in the rebellion, the post of commander in room of Joab. These means were successful: the men of Judah were now the most zealous in hastening to Gilgal to escort the king home. The precedence they thus gained, and the favours shown by David to the tribe that had been the ringleader of the rebellion, reawakened the jealousy of the northern tribes. The result was that the men of Israel departed to their homes in high indignation, leaving Judah to escort the king to Jerusalem; while Sheba the Benjamite engaged the more discontented and passionate of them in a new rebellion.

134. This second rebellion did not assume such large proportions, and was soon extinguished by the prompt action of David and the energy of Joab. David had kept his promise to Amasa, and made him commander in place of Joab. He ordered the new commander to gather the men of Judah, and to be ready to start in three days in pursuit of Sheba. For some reason Amasa failed to be in time; and David at once commissioned Abishai, who was now probably the next in command, to take the troops in Jerusalem and pursue after Sheba. Joab accompanied his brother. Meeting Amasa, the rival who had supplanted him as David's general,—he had now raised his forces, and overtaken the others at Gibeon,—Joab gave him a friendly greeting to put him off his guard, and then treacherously murdered him. He then took Amasa's place as commander of all the forces gathered for the pursuit.[1] Meanwhile Sheba had

[1] We have followed the text as it stands. But perhaps we should read 'Joab' instead of 'Abishai' in 2 Sam. xx. 6: in which case Joab was the leader of the second punitive party, and his later appearance at the head of the united forces does not need to be explained.

gone through all the northern tribes, endeavouring, with little success, to enlist them in his cause. Finally, he fled with a few men of his own tribe to the far north, to Abel-Beth-Maacah, near the sources of the Jordan.[1] There he was overtaken by Joab, who proceeded vigorously to besiege the town. The inhabitants, however, had no desire to see their town destroyed: by the advice of a wise woman who had negotiated privately with Joab, they put Sheba to death, and threw his head over the wall. Joab thereupon retired satisfied; the rebellion was at an end. The threatened division between Israel and Judah was thus prevented for the time being by the vigorous policy of David and his general.

135. **David's closing Days.**—David's last days were embittered by the thorny question of the succession. Though the right of the firstborn was generally acknowledged, the will of the reigning king was also an important factor in determining who should succeed; and in this case the two principles came into conflict. Since the death of Absalom, Adonijah was the oldest son of the royal family; and he now conducted himself as the rightful heir. He gained the support of Abiathar the priest, and the still more powerful adherence of Joab, now reinstated in his position as commander of the host; and a considerable party of the people recognised his right. Another party, however, favoured Solomon the son of Bathsheba: among whom were Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest, Benaiah the captain of the king's bodyguard, and others of influence who stood near the king's person.

136. It was believed that David had sworn to Bathsheba that Solomon should succeed him on the throne. Both parties intrigued; and at first King David, now bent and feeble with years, showed no desire to interfere. Adonijah precipitated matters by calling his friends together to a sacrificial feast at

[1] This place is probably marked by the village of Abil, about five miles west of Dan.

En-rogel (the Fuller's Fountain), outside the walls of Jerusalem.[1] As none of the opposing faction was invited, the purpose of the gathering was at once suspected; and Nathan hastened to counteract the conspiracy against Solomon. He induced Bathsheba to interview the king, and reminding him of his promise in Solomon's favour, to tell him of Adonijah's doings at En-rogel; and he himself followed her into the king's presence, and confirmed her report, declaring that Adonijah had already been declared king. David at once took action. He ordered Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah with the bodyguard to escort Solomon down to the fountain of Gihon,[2] and there to anoint and proclaim him king. The command was at once obeyed: Solomon was anointed by Zadok with the sacred oil, and proclaimed king amid the rejoicing of the people. The conspirators at En-rogel were surprised in the midst of their festivities by the unusual sounds from the other quarter of the valley, and when the report was brought by Jonathan the son of Abiathar that the king had raised Solomon to the throne, they scattered in alarm. Adonijah fled to the sanctuary of Zion, and laid hold of the horns of the altar; and he was only re-assured by the oath of Solomon to give him his life on condition of future loyalty. He was brought into Solomon's presence, and paid him the required homage. Thus the strife of parties was happily ended without bloodshed, and Solomon was established on the throne.

137. We do not know how long David lived after he had abdicated in favour of Solomon; but it is probable that the weak and bedridden king did not survive many days. He had held the reins of government for forty years: had tasted the cup of life to the full—its hardships and desperate ventures, as well as its enjoyments and the glory of satisfied ambition. He must

[1] It lay to the south of the town, and is usually identified with Job's Fountain, where the valleys of the Kidron and Hinnom join.

[2] It lay in the valley of the Kidron, east of Jerusalem. It was scarcely half a mile from En-rogel, where the opposing faction was gathered.

now lay down his kingdom at the call of a higher King who exercises dominion over all. David bravely faced the coming change, and addressed himself finally to dispose of the affairs of his kingdom.

138. In the last charge to his son Solomon—as recorded in 1 Kings ii.—there are many things worthy of a true king. He counselled him to be strong, and show himself a man. No timid or irresolute spirit could govern such a kingdom: what had been built up by manliness and courage was to be maintained by the same high qualities. He counselled him, further, to be a man of God; for only by right principle and faith in God could the throne be permanently established. Here spoke a true king, who had himself honoured Jehovah, and executed judgment and justice in the gate. Had David not exercised faith and humility before God, and justice in his dealings with his subjects, he would never have been called "the man after God's own heart." Together with the legacy of the kingdom, he left his son Solomon the richer legacy of a noble example.

139. But what shall we say of the codicil to David's last testament? His mention of Barzillai the Gileadite, who had shown him kindness at the time of his flight from Absalom, is entirely worthy of David's heart. He would have Solomon repay kindness with kindness, and, by honouring Barzillai's family, make good a long-outstanding debt. But apparently David's gratitude for benefits received was balanced by an undying remembrance of injuries. He remembered the high-handed conduct of Joab, his murder of the two generals Abner and Amasa, doubtless also his pitiless slaying of Absalom; and he wished to pay off these old scores against the man who all through life had loyally served him. He remembered, too, the curses of Shimei, whom he had publicly pardoned at the time: looked back upon the incident, apparently, with a grudge at his own magnanimity; and he counselled Solomon to remember the man's guilt, and to bring down his hoary head to the grave with blood.

140. If these words are authentic, they must stand as heavy counts against the nobility of David's character. It would certainly be unfair to let them outweigh everything else in David's life.[1] Something might still be said in favour of the view that David was cautioning Solomon against men who might prove dangerous to his government. Yet it would seem impossible—if we take the words as literally David's—to avoid the conclusion that the king had become more spiteful and vindictive in his old age. That is quite possible: human life is full of such inconsistencies, and even good men often display very disappointing features of character. On the other hand, it is hard to believe that David so belied his better nature as to forget the loyal services of Joab, or to repent of his magnanimity to Shimei. The psychological difficulty is relieved by the literary criticism of the chapter, which discovers in the text signs of later revision. All things considered, it seems highly probable that David's charge to Solomon has been at least considerably modified, in order to justify or to palliate the cruel deeds with which Solomon inaugurated his reign.

141. **David's Character.**—Whatever conclusion be arrived at on this point, David's character must be judged by the dominant and prevailing features of his life. We may sometimes gain a little, sometimes lose a little, by setting aside the later idealising additions that have gathered like an aureole round the figure of David; but the main outlines of his character are well defined, and the most faithful scrutiny of the record only serves to bring out more clearly the real excellences of this gifted king.

142. Without doubt David was a great king and a great man. Brave and chivalrous, energetic and prudent, a judge of men, a true lover of his country, just and wisely impartial in his administration—he combined all the high qualities of a king

[1] If ordinary writers show a prejudice of partiality for David, Renan shows the prejudice of hostility against him when he contends that in these hateful commissions David "showed the black perfidy of his hypocritical soul."

who has made his way to the throne by real merit, and held it successfully to the last. He had also the personal qualities that endear a king to his subjects and a man to his fellows: considerate humanity, loyalty in friendship, strong family feeling, the genial gift of music and song. The stains upon his character —his deceitfulness, his severity in war, his sensual indulgence— may be partly excused by the general customs of the time; and where he fell below the common standards of morality, he righted himself again by a genuine contrition and repentance. Add to this an upright and earnest piety, faith in God and humble submission to His will: qualities that found expression in rude, even superstitious ways typical of the age, but forming evidently the bedrock of his character.

143. Whether we consider David's personal qualities, or his great achievements for a nation whose best traits he represented, we cannot wonder that the later generations of Israel exalted him above all his successors, and formed after his image their ideal king of the future Messianic times.

> "He who ruling over men is just,
> Ruling in the fear of God,
> Is as the light that riseth in the morning,
> As the sun in a cloudless dawn."

CHAPTER VIII.

RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE TIME OF DAVID.

144. It is easier to learn the Customs of an Age than to reach an adequate Picture of its Conceptions.
145. Law of advancing Development not to be too rigidly interpreted.
146. Great growth of Culture, Commerce, and Prosperity.
147. Not a reflective or critical Age: its Faith "objective."
148. Forms of Worship not radically changed from the preceding Age.
149. Conceptions largely consonant with the rude Customs.
150. Indications of Progress.
151. Resistance to lower and more corrupt Beliefs and Practices.
152. New Prominence given to the national Idea of God.
153. This Advance partly a Revival of the Mosaic Faith.
154. The Ark (later the Temple) in Jerusalem a visible Expression of the national Idea.
155. An Age of healthy religious Development.

CHAPTER VIII.

RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE TIME OF DAVID.

144. In trying to estimate the religious conditions of any age, it is usually an easier matter to picture the religious customs than to give a precise statement of the religious conceptions. For customs are more permanent, and the historian cannot fail to give some indication of them; but the conceptions are more variable and less easily defined. So, in judging of the religious situation in David's time, it is easier to reach a satisfactory picture of the religious usages than of the motives and conceptions that guided the people in the practice of them. The customs are not easily changed: they remain the same for generations, and when any important changes occur they are observed and recorded. But variations of conception are less noticeable, because unperceived; and the ebb and flow of the religious life is often ignored. The difficulty that thus emerges is increased in this case by the fact that the history of David, as we have it, is evidently coloured by the conditions of thought that prevailed in a much later time.

145. The difficulty here is usually met by the assumption that the lower conceptions found in the record—the less spiritual ideas of religion and morality—may be safely credited to the earlier age, while the higher or more advanced conceptions are to be referred to the later period to which the sacred writer belonged. This solution, however, is not quite satisfactory. It may be, roughly speaking, true that the very idea of a developing

revelation implies the gradual purifying of religious thought from the earlier elements of grossness or superstition, and thus a reasonable presumption is created in favour of such a treatment of the history. But this law of development must not be too rigidly interpreted: the principle of continuity must leave room for retrogressions, temporary reactions, spiritual failures. Times of high spiritual life are not infrequently followed by times of decadence, and the recrudescence of apparently exploded superstitions. The Rabbinic religion came after the prophetic: the age of the Judges came after the age of Moses. So the time of David may have contained features which a later age could not appreciate; even as the law of Moses had moral elements which only the later prophets could seize in their true grandeur. This by way of caution.

146. When we contrast the time of David with the foregoing period of the Judges, we cannot but remark the great outward advance that has been made. It is like the difference between barbarism and civilisation. The nation, formerly nothing more than a handful of separate clans, each with the minimum of organisation, is now bound together in firm political unity. A new order has made itself felt, and has brought other blessings in its train. The population has greatly increased, and cities of commerce have sprung up, trading in the products of many lands. The new extension of the kingdom has given an impetus to trade and commerce; and the alliance with Phenicia has led to a great influx of articles of comfort and of luxury. In every direction new channels of enterprise are opened up; and the years of peace which followed David's campaigns must have been years of growing prosperity and culture.

147. It was not a reflective age, but one of unparalleled strenuous activity. A nation in which the material interests of life are greatly increased is not one in which to expect much reflection on spiritual things, or much criticism of the conceptions or modes of worship of the past. Whatever religious movement

was in progress was rather of the nature of an unconscious development than the fruit of any conscious and set purpose to revise preceding religious principles. A candid survey of the history easily shows that the kind of worship and ritual that prevailed in earlier times was preserved and continued right through this period, and indeed with little variation all through the centuries of the kingdom.

148. Thus the outward forms of the worship of Israel suffered little change. The old *high place* worship continued: every locality had its own sacred spot where the people gathered for worship and revered Jehovah under forms that did not differ greatly from those of the Canaanite worship. Some spots were held peculiarly sacred, such as Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, Ramah: these had a wide reputation. Sometimes family or individual reasons determined the preference given to one place above another: Bethlehem and Hebron were the favourite places of sacrifice for David's family.[1] This high place worship was not directly affected by David's removal of the Ark to the Tent on Mount Zion, or even by the later building of the Temple. Just as the existence of the sanctuary at Shiloh, where the Ark was formerly, did not prevent other sanctuaries from being held in reverence, so neither did the new sanctuary of Jerusalem prejudice the older forms of worship. The high places continued undisturbed and even unquestioned throughout the time of the early kingdom; and still later, even after the reforming efforts of Hezekiah and Josiah, they were held in honour by the multitudes of Israel.[2] The forms of worship, too, were dangerously similar to those of the Canaanites: *asherahs* and *massebahs*—sacred posts and stone-pillars—stood beside the altars, and the worship round these verged on idolatry. And other forms of superstitious ritual prevailed. The old relic of family worship, the *Teraphim*

[1] 1 Sam. xx. 6; 2 Sam. xv. 7, 12.

[2] In the earlier period the reforming prophets attacked Baalism, but not the high place worship in itself (so Elijah). Hezekiah's reform was directed mainly against the idolatrous worship of the high places; while Josiah sought their total abolition.

or household gods, continued in use, though we do not know what ritual was connected with them. Still more prominent in popular reverence was the *Ephod*, an image of Jehovah which gave oracular responses. It usually remained in some sanctuary under the guardianship of a priest; but it could also be carried about from place to place. Both Saul and David regularly consulted the Ephod in times of difficulty, or before taking any important step.[1] In the ordinary circumstances of life the people resorted to *seers*, or even to *wizards* and *necromancers*, for guidance in their perplexities, or to learn the Divine will.

149. The conceptions of God which commonly prevailed were no doubt on a par with these customs and forms of worship. It is to be feared that for many Israelites, Jehovah was little more than the local God of the high place, and that His character was not very clearly distinguished from the local Baal who was worshipped by the Canaanites in their vicinity. At most He was the God of the land: He ruled in Canaan just as other gods held sway in Moab, Ammon, or the land of the Philistines. He was no doubt a God of right and truth; but power rather than goodness was prominent in their thought of Him. He dwelt in thick darkness, and His worshippers regarded Him with fear and dread. His mysterious will was feared, acting on men like a fatality:[2] He punished with death those who unwittingly touched the symbol of His majesty:[3] there are many indications of the thought—traceable to the most primitive times—that Jehovah exercised His power in mysterious and arbitrary ways. It is in accordance with such a view of God that the worshipper should try to please Him, not so much by holy and righteous living, as by making sacrifice,[4] or by some act of special self-denial.[5] Similarly, Jehovah was the guardian of oaths; but even the

[1] 1 Sam. xiv. 18 (LXX), 41, xxiii. 2, 6, 9–12, xxx. 7, 8.

[2] 1 Sam. ii. 25, "The Lord *would* slay them."

[3] 2 Sam. vi. 7.

[4] 1 Sam. xxvi. 19, "If it be the Lord that hath stirred thee up against me, let Him smell an offering."

[5] Cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 24.

unwitting transgressor was punishable not less than one who committed a voluntary breach of the engagement (cf. the case of Jonathan's breach of Saul's taboo). So, when Saul had sinned by breaking the old covenant made with the Gibeonites, Jehovah is said to have accepted the punishment of his descendants by way of atonement: when seven of his family were hanged, Jehovah "was entreated for the land."[1]

150. In all this there seems to be little advance beyond the religious conceptions of a much earlier age. Nevertheless there are indications that the religious life was making a real advance. The progress was seen in two ways: first, in the endeavour to cast out some of the baser elements of the older religion; and secondly, in the revival of Israel's faith in Jehovah as the national God.

151. From the time of Samuel there was a certain reaction of sentiment against the cruder forms of Israel's worship. It was probably under the guidance of this prophet, who represented the nobler spirit of the age, that Saul was led to decree the expulsion of the wizards and necromancers from the land. From the frequent mention of these superstitions, and the numerous names given to those who practised them, one can scarcely doubt that the faith in such black arts was very prevalent, and did much to corrupt and degrade the people. The fact that Israel's first king tried to banish these corrupt practices from the land, shows that there was a growing feeling of what was worthy of Jehovah and what was unworthy. There can be no doubt that David retained in full force the enactments of the first king; for he was in closer touch than was Saul with the prophetic spirit of the day.

152. But the main development of religious thought arose from the new situation in which Israel found itself under the early kings. With the unity of the nation, the thought of the national Jehovah came once more into prominence, and with the extension of the nation's power came also the thought of the widely ex-

[1] 2 Sam. xxi. 14.

tending power of the nation's God. In those days religion was very closely associated with the temporal good or bad fortunes of a people: disaster was naturally interpreted as a sign of weakness (if not of wrath) on the part of the divinity, while victory and success tended to confirm the people's faith in his power and especial favour. Hence the wonderful growth of Israel's national fortunes carried with it a growing sense of the power and favour of Jehovah, the God of the nation. It was He who had prepared the way for Israel's supremacy, and scattered her enemies by the might of His power. It was in Jehovah's name that Saul had summoned the tribes to battle, and Samuel anointed him king: it was in Jehovah's name that David won all his victories, and so wonderfully extended his dominion over the heathen. He was no longer conceivable, then, as a small local divinity of limited power: He was the great conquering God of Israel, the Lord of hosts. In the light of this larger conception, a new enthusiasm of devotion was awakened, in which patriotism and religious feeling were intimately blended.

153. To some extent this conception of a national God was only the revival of the faith that had united the tribes of Israel in their desert-wanderings, and in the earlier stages of their conquest of Canaan. Development of faith often takes place by bringing into new prominence some half-forgotten truth of the past; and so it was here. The old faith in the national Jehovah had been greatly weakened by the tribal dissensions that followed Israel's settlement in Canaan; and only rarely did the old enthusiasm arise—as in a Deborah, inspiring the nation with the thought of their common faith and common experience of Jehovah's deliverances. Now the old faith returned to Israel with the added emphasis of new national experiences. The same God who had brought them from Egypt and given them the land of Canaan had now revealed Himself anew in the greatness of His power, as "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." The new emphasis thus laid on the thought of Jehovah as the national God, exalted in power, must have acted

beneficially on the people's conception of His character, and prepared for the fuller revelation of a God who is not only God of gods, but God alone.

154. A new impulse was given to this more elevated aspect of the Jehovah-worship when David removed the Ark to Mount Zion, and still more when Solomon built on the same spot his magnificent temple. By restoring the national symbol to honour, David provided a visible expression for the national religious aspirations; and whatever were Solomon's motives in the building of the temple, his work plainly contributed to the same end.

155. Thus, when we compare the religion of Israel at this time with the ages that preceded, we find many indications that the nation was making marked progress in religious faith as well as in outward civilisation. We can scarcely doubt that this age also compares very favourably with later periods of the history of Israel. In the middle centuries of the kingdom the worship of the Baalim and of other heathen divinities prevailed, sometimes—as in the days of Elijah and Elisha—to an alarming extent: the enthusiasm for the national Jehovah had seriously declined since the days of David. The beginnings of the decline may be dated from the time of Solomon, whose erection of heathen sanctuaries for his wives prepared the way for the later influx of heathen customs, and retarded the progress of true religion for centuries. Even in the later times of reform, both before and after the reign of King Josiah, we hear of idolatrous rites being practised and abominable Canaanitish customs revived, from which the first times of the kingdom were exempt.[1] On the whole, therefore, we have reason to believe that in spite of some remaining customs of idolatry and superstition, the religion of Israel in David's time was advancing in a healthy development, and actually attained a high spiritual level—perhaps the highest attainable within the limits of a national religion.

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 4–13. Josiah's reform was followed by reaction (Jer. xi. 13, xliv. 7, 8, 15–18; Ezek. viii. 5–16).

CHAPTER IX.

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON.

Paragraphs 156–158. Introductory.

156. The national Situation at the Time of Solomon's Accession.
157. His good Intentions, illustrated by the Prayer for Wisdom. 1 Kings iii. 4–15.
158. His Career not to be thereby prejudged.

159–163. Solomon's Throne established by Violence. 1 Kings ii. 13–46.

160. Adonijah charged with Treason, and slain. 1 Kings ii. 13–25.
161. Abiathar deposed: Joab slain. 1 Kings ii. 26–35.
162. Vengeance lights on Shimei. 1 Kings ii. 36–46.
163. Solomon—not David—responsible for these Cruelties.

164–167. Foreign Relations. 1 Kings iii. 1, v. 1, ix. 16, xi. 14–25.

164. Solomon content to maintain, if possible, David's Conquests.
165. Friendly Treaties with Phenicia and Egypt. 1 Kings iii. 1, v. 1, ix. 16.
166. Unrest in Edom. 1 Kings xi. 14–22.
167. Resistance in Syria. 2 Chron. viii. 3; 1 Kings xi. 23–25.

168–170. Extension of Commerce. 1 Kings ix. 26–x. 29.

169. Egyptian and Syrian Trade.
170. Trade with Phenicia and on the Red Sea.

171. Works of Military Defence. 1 Kings iv. 26, ix. 15–18, xi. 27.

172–177. The Temple and the Royal Palace. 1 Kings v.–viii.

173. His Preparations. 1 Kings v., vii. 13, 14, 46, ix. 20–23.
174. The Building of the Temple. 1 Kings vi., vii. 13–51.
175. Its Dedication. 1 Kings viii.
176. Solomon's Aim in building the Temple.
177. The building of the Royal Palace. 1 Kings vii. 1–12.

178–180. Solomon's Greatness.

178. His Court and Officials. 1 Kings iv. 1–28.
179. His Power and Wisdom. 1 Kings iii. 16–28, iv. 29–34.
180. His Wealth and Splendour: the Visit of Sheba's Queen. 1 Kings x.

181–183. The reverse Side of the Picture.

182. Solomon's private Life. 1 Kings xi. 1–8.
183. Solomon's public Administration. 1 Kings xi. 26–40.

184–185. Concluding Estimate: an Oriental Despot.

CHAPTER IX.

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON.

156. WHEN King Solomon came to the throne, the people of Israel were advancing by leaps and bounds in the various paths of national development. The dormant energies of the nation were awakened to full activity: fresh impulses were everywhere in movement, leading to new beginnings and hopeful enterprise in every department. Its varied and rapid growth reminds one of Milton's picture of "a noble and puissant nation, rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks." In one sense it was easy to govern such a nation; for with the growth of prosperity the power of the monarch had grown, and his means of action were greatly increased. But it was no slight task to govern wisely and well. In this time of amazing growth the whole national life was in movement, and new directions were being found for men's thoughts and activities. The national ideals were in process of formation; and much must depend on the head of the nation for the moulding of the nation's faith and aims. We have now to see how far Solomon acquitted himself of his task, and how far his reign served the true development of his people.

157. We may well believe that Solomon—like most kings—began his reign with lofty intentions. In the beautiful story of Solomon's prayer at Gibeon, we have an indication that he was not unaware of the greatness of his task. The new monarch

had gone to Gibeon to inaugurate his reign with a great public sacrifice: had offered a thousand offerings on the great altar; and thereafter, retiring to rest, he had a wonderful dream. Jehovah appeared to him and asked him his heart's desire. No outward gift did Solomon ask—riches, or victory over his enemies, or length of days, or honour and fame; but what is better than all, and lies at the root of all—wisdom to guide him in his ruling functions. Jehovah approved of the choice, and promised him not only what he desired, but all the other things added to it. In this dream-prayer of the king we can read the noble aspiration of a mind that knew the difficulties and temptations of the task, and sought Heaven's guidance for its right fulfilment. The prayer is summed up in the one petition for an understanding heart, for the kind of wisdom a ruler needs to judge his people and discern right from wrong. The true ruler must exercise a wise discernment, if he is to steer his course rightly, and be a minister of good to his people. He must see beneath the shows of things, beneath the flattery of courtiers and the specious insinuations of detractors: must be able to detect goodness and worth under whatever unpromising exterior, and evil under whatever guise. Such practical tact and insight are necessary, not only for rulers and those who hold high position, but for all men, so far as their influence extends. It is this which gives the light of direction to the pure intention and the loving heart, making these duly effective. Next to the prayer for the pure heart must always come this prayer for an understanding heart: for the wisdom which enables a man to direct his way aright amid the entanglement of good and evil in the world.

158. It is scarcely fair, perhaps, to emphasise that this was no actual prayer of Solomon, but only something that passed through his mind in visions of the night: he only dreamed that he prayed it. The dream-prayer may still be taken as the indication of Solomon's earnest aspiration to be a worthy follower of his father on the throne of Israel. On the other hand, we must be careful

not to prejudge the reign of Solomon, or the character of the king as it unfolds itself in his government, by laying undue emphasis upon the story. We know how later tradition has magnified the wisdom of Solomon out of all reason, and beyond all that the scanty details of the Bible can justify. His wisdom has been represented as the quarry of all the wisdom of antiquity, his science of nature as so profound as to include the knowledge of the languages of birds and beasts, and his architectural works as so magnificent that they could only have been achieved by the aid of genii. In these later days of inquiry and criticism, the pendulum has sometimes swung to the other extreme, so that many are inclined to reverse the judgment of tradition. The stories of the reign of Solomon have been carefully sifted : every atom of evidence that tells in his disfavour has been seriously weighed ; and in the light of such inquiry the halo that surrounded the name of King Solomon the Wise has practically disappeared. In view of such diverging judgments we require to set all preconceptions aside, and with the material at our disposal to discriminate carefully between the good and the evil, and particularly to try to discover whether Solomon's career was worthy of his own aspirations and his magnificent natural capabilities.

159. **A Throne established by Violence.**—The opening acts of Solomon's reign were certainly ominous. Apparently he did not consider his throne secure till he had removed out of the way the enemies of his house, and those who had opposed his elevation to the throne. Chief among these were Adonijah his elder brother, Joab and Abiathar who had aided him in the late conspiracy, and Shimei, a fanatical adherent of Saul's house.

160. Solomon had already promised his brother Adonijah his life on condition of his future loyalty ; but a king's suspicions are easily aroused. Adonijah presumed to seek the hand of Abishag the Shunammite[1]—the young wife who had been given

[1] *i.e.* a native of Shunem, lying north of the valley of Jezreel.

to David in his old age. But as the entire harem of David was regarded as the peculiar property of his successor on the throne, the aspirant proceeded warily, and sought the good offices of the queen-mother, Bathsheba. Having no suspicion of Adonijah's good faith, Bathsheba put his suit before her royal son. But instead of acceding to the request, Solomon's indignation broke loose : he imagined that treachery was in the air ; and though he had promised to grant Bathsheba whatever she might request, he immediately declared that Adonijah was aspiring to the throne. Without endeavouring to verify his suspicions, he sent and had his brother put to death by Benaiah, the captain of his bodyguard.

161. He then proceeded to take a similar vengeance on Adonijah's partisans, Joab and Abiathar, both of whom had taken part in the assembly at En-rogel. The life of the priest was spared out of respect for the sacred office he had filled, but Solomon satisfied his grudge by deposing him from the priesthood. With Abiathar the old priestly line of Eli came to an end : the family of Zadok stood henceforth without a rival in the priesthood of Jerusalem. Joab—David's unruly but faithful general, and now a very old man—was much more cruelly treated. Hearing of the vengeance Solomon was taking, and distrusting the king's intentions towards himself, Joab had fled for refuge to the altar which stood beside the tent on Zion. Solomon acted as if the flight of Joab were a confession of guilt, and immediately ordered Benaiah to seize him and put him to death. When the captain feared to violate the sanctuary by slaying a man before the altar, the king commanded him to obey orders, declaring that it was a sacred duty to take vengeance on a man who had blood on his hands, and to clear the innocent from the imputation of complicity by punishing the real criminal.

162. A similar fate befell Shimei, whose death was justified in the same way. This Benjamite, who had cursed David at the time of his flight from Absalom, had been magnanimously pardoned ; but Solomon was not bound by David's oath, nor

had he David's magnanimous spirit. He gave Shimei his life meanwhile; but he ordered him to remain in Jerusalem, threatening him with death if he put a foot outside the city. After faithfully fulfilling this hard condition for three years, a sudden emergency led Shimei to overstep the condition: two of his servants ran away to Gath, and he went thither to recover them. On his return Solomon mercilessly carried out his threat, and Shimei fell by the hand of Benaiah, who acted as royal executioner.

163. A different complexion would be given to these dark deeds could we assume that the narrative of David's last charge to his son was authentic. But, as we have seen, the historical probability is in favour of David's entire innocence. Solomon acted on his own initiative with reference to Joab and Abiathar, no less than in the case of Adonijah. And in spite of all that may be said in defence of these measures,—as being necessary for the king's safety, and quite in harmony with the ideals of justice in that age,—we can scarcely resist the impression that Solomon was acting according to the usual custom of Oriental despots.

164. **Foreign Relations.**—Solomon's foreign policy was unlike that of his father, and he did not add to the nation's military glory. King David had pushed his conquests far beyond the borders of Israel, and was always prepared to chastise his hostile neighbours; and as a consequence his name was feared by all the peoples around, from Damascus to the Egyptian border. His son was not a warrior, though he made abundant preparations for war: the days of extended conquest were now past. The altered circumstances may account in some degree for the altered policy: it was enough for David's successor to hold the conquests already made. But in all probability Solomon was disinclined for war: he sought his glory rather in royal magnificence and display than in the splendour of martial achievement. He adopted, therefore, a defensive policy: he was content to fortify his country against invasion, and to trust to friendly alliances and to wise diplomacy.

165. With Phenicia and with Egypt, Solomon seems to have remained on friendly terms all through his reign. With Tyre, the most famous of the Phenician towns, and already a great commercial centre, he continued the alliance made by his father; and still further cemented it by commercial treaties with Hiram which were mutually advantageous. At the beginning of his reign, too, Solomon came into friendly relations with the King of Egypt—probably Pasebchanu II., the last king of the Twenty-first Dynasty. The Egyptians at this time were evidently desirous of reviving their political influence and their commercial relations with Syria and the north. In one expedition—mentioned only incidentally (1 Kings ix. 16)—they occupied Gezer, a Canaanitish town on the western border of Ephraim, and lying in proximity to the important high road which led from the south to the Euphrates. We do not learn the details of the agreement made between Egypt and Israel; but two vital facts are recorded,—the first, that the King of Egypt gave his daughter in marriage to Solomon; and the second, that the city of Gezer was also handed over to him by way of dowry. The alliance was doubtless of advantage to both parties. To Egypt it secured an extension of commercial relations with Israel and the farther north; while to Solomon it not only served a commercial end, but brought with it new guarantees of strength and peace to his kingdom.

166. It has been reasonably suggested that this treaty of alliance with Egypt included some mutual arrangement with regard to the affairs of Edom, in which both Israel and Egypt were interested parties. At the time of the exterminating war in that land, which was carried on to the bitter end by Joab, Hadad, one of the seed-royal of Edom, had made his escape to Egypt. He found favour at the court of the Pharaoh,[1] and married the queen's sister. After David's death Hadad returned to his own country, hoping to re-establish his kingdom. How far he was successful we are not informed. He seems to have

[1] This Pharaoh was doubtless a predecessor of Solomon's father-in-law.

at least maintained his position in Edom, and to have harassed Solomon in the south; but his power could not have been very considerable, since Solomon's route through Edom to the Red Sea remained open.

167. In the north the Syrians proved restless tributaries, and there can be little doubt that Solomon suffered some diminution of power. We hear, indeed, of a successful campaign conducted against Hamath-Zobah in the East Jordan land;[1] but it is evident from the indications of the older narrative (1 Kings xi. 23–25) that the renewal of the Syrian conflict issued in some loss of sovereignty. The most powerful adversary was Rezon. This adventurer had formerly been in the service of Hadadezer of Zobah; but either he had fallen into disfavour with his lord, or had been obliged to part from him in the troubles arising from David's conquests. For some time he lived as a raiding chieftain, fighting for his own hand: later he seized the city of Damascus and became king, founding a new dynasty there, which was Israel's foe for generations. As King of Damascus, Rezon was able to cope with Solomon on more equal terms; and he showed himself a formidable opponent.

168. **Extension of Commerce.**—If Solomon did not quite succeed in retaining the military position of his father David, he was more successful in the way of developing peaceful commercial relations with other States. He encouraged the growing trade with Phenicia, Egypt, and Arabia, as well as with the Syrians and Hittites in the north.

169. With Egypt, as we have already seen, he maintained peaceful relations, and strengthened them by his Egyptian marriage. A new trade arose between the countries, probably sanctioned and encouraged by both powers. As Gezer, Dor, and Megiddo were in Solomon's possession, the great route connecting Syria and Egypt, which ran by these towns along his western border, would be in his power; and a friendly treaty,

[1] 2 Chron. viii. 3.

giving protection to the trade-caravans from Egypt would be highly advantageous to both nations. Solomon entered heartily into this Egyptian commerce. When prosecuting his scheme of military defence, he purchased from Egypt a vast quantity of war-chariots and of horses: we are told that he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, distributed in Jerusalem and in the chariot-cities prepared for their accommodation. He also took largely into his own hands the trade in horses and chariots: the royal merchants brought them from Egypt and resold them to the Syrians, and even to the Hittites farther north.

170. Still more considerable was the outcome of Solomon's friendship with King Hiram of Tyre. Here Solomon found the assistance he needed for his building enterprises, and also for the development of his maritime trade. With Tyrian help he built a fleet of ships at Eziongeber on the shore of the Red Sea.[1] These ships were manned by Tyrians and Israelites, and were a new means of communication with Arabia and the surrounding coasts. They made trading expeditions as far as Ophir—a mart of commerce situated possibly on the south coast of Arabia, but having connections with Africa and the far East. They returned bearing rich and unwonted merchandise—not only gold and precious stones, but sandalwood, ivory, apes, and peacocks. It may have been with a view to protect the route through Edom to the port of Eziongeber that Solomon built Tamar in the wilderness, on the southern border of Judah. Besides this maritime commerce, which was carried on conjointly with Tyre, an active general trade was also developed with Tyre and other Phenician towns, in which Israel exchanged the produce of her fields for Phenician timber, or the products of the Mediterranean.

[1] They were called "Tarshish-ships," being built after the style of the Tyrian ships that traded to Tarshish in Spain (1 Kings x. 22). The names and character of the merchandise indicate that these ships were Eastern traders. The length of time stated to be spent in one voyage—three years—has been taken to indicate that Ophir lay even farther distant than South Arabia: some have identified it with Abhira, at the mouth of the Indus.

171. **Works of Military Defence.**—While Solomon thus cultivated peaceful relations with other peoples, he was also careful to make thorough defensive preparations in case of war. His first attention was given to the fortification of the capital. He built Millo, a fort of the surrounding wall; it stood doubtless on the north side of the city, which was most exposed to attack. It is further said that he built "the wall of Jerusalem," and that he "closed up the breach of the city of David."[1] Whether this implies that an additional wall was carried round the western hill—as some suggest—must remain undecided. In any case Solomon put the fortifications of Jerusalem in a state of thorough repair, and greatly increased its means of defence. At the same time he strengthened the general defences of the country by building or refortifying several towns which lay near the borders or which commanded important routes. Thus Hazor in the far north; Megiddo on the southern side of the Plain of Esdraelon; Gezer, Bethhoron, and Baalath—all three near the western borders; and Tamar in the desert of southern Judah: all these were strongly fortified and garrisoned. Solomon also increased his military resources by accumulating great stores of provision, and by large purchases of horses and war-chariots. All this implies that the wise king not only maintained, but considerably increased David's standing army; and that he spared no effort or expense to secure the land against attack.

172. **The Temple and the Royal Palace.**—The great work of Solomon, and one which occupied a considerable part of his reign, was the building of the Temple and the royal palace on the eastern hill of Jerusalem. In the energy he threw into his work he showed his passion for stately architecture and vast display no less than his religious zeal. He began his preparations as soon as he had ascended the throne; and he spared neither himself nor his people to carry his plans to a successful conclusion.

173. He found the skill he required in Phenician workmen.

[1] 1 Kings ix. 15, xi. 27.

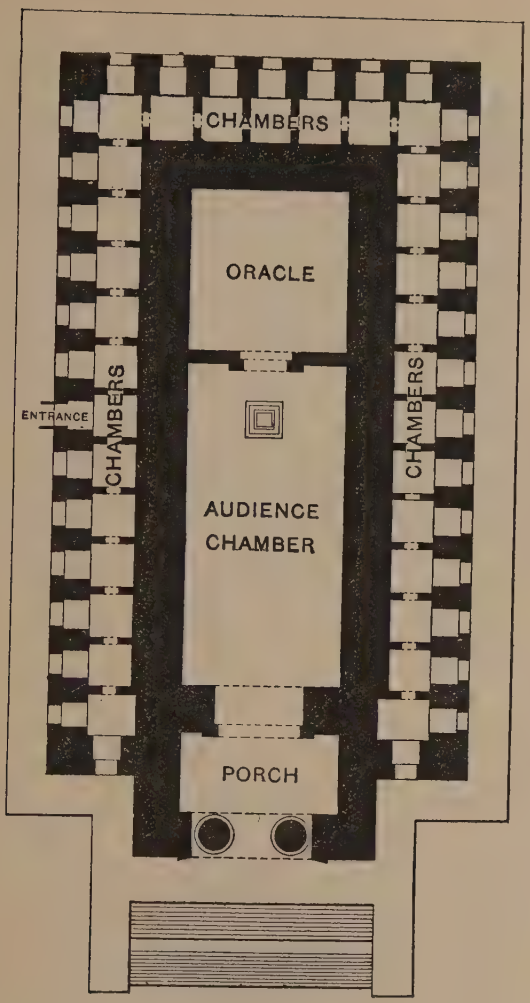
King Hiram also supplied him with cedar and firwood from Lebanon, and sent him sixscore talents of gold. For this assistance in men and material Solomon paid Hiram year by year large quantities of wheat and beaten oil ; he also presented Hiram with twenty cities and their adjoining territory in the land of Galilee. The wood was cut down in the forests by Solomon's people under the direction of Hiram's, and for this purpose alone Solomon made a levy of thirty thousand people, of whom ten thousand were engaged monthly at Lebanon. The cut timber was conveyed down to the coast, and then transported by sea on rafts to a convenient place (Joppa—2 Chron. ii. 14), whence it was conveyed by Solomon's men to Jerusalem. The head designer of the works in brass was a Tyrian, Hiram by name, whose mother was an Israelite of the tribe of Naphtali :[1] he took charge of the foundries erected in the Jordan plain between Succoth and Zarethan. For the quarrying and masonwork, Solomon employed a huge army of workmen,—seventy thousand bearers of burdens, eighty thousand stone-hewers, and more than three thousand overseers ; while in the fashioning of the stones his own people were aided by the Tyrians and the skilful Gebalites.[2] The greater part of the work was done by forced labour, which was drawn not only from the subject Canaanite population, but from the people of Israel generally.[3]

174. Having thus made his preparations and his contract with King Hiram, Solomon began the building of the Temple in the fourth year of his reign. The erection occupied seven years. Few details of the actual structure are given ; but the picture may be supplemented—conjecturally, it is true, but with some degree of probability—from the more exact description which Ezekiel has given of his ideal Temple. (See the adjoining ground-plan of Stade.) On the highest spot of Mount Moriah,

[1] Perhaps the more correct form of the name was Huram Abi (cf. 2 Chron. ii. 14, where his mother is called a Danite).

[2] 1 Kings v. 18, R.V.; cf. Ezek. xxvii. 9. Gebal was a town of Phenicia, not far from the seacoast.

[3] Cf. 1 Kings v. 13 ff. and ix. 20 ff.



GROUND-PLAN OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE (ACCORDING TO STADE).

there is a rock to which tradition points as the site of the ancient altar. The Temple lay to the west of this ; and as the ground soon declines in this direction towards the Tyropœan valley, considerable substructures must have been necessary. The Temple faced the east. It consisted of a Porch, an outer chamber (the Holy Place) and an Oracle or inner chamber (later named the Holy of Holies); while, surrounding the whole, numerous side-rooms were adjoined, intended for the use of the priests and for the accommodation of the sacred utensils and treasures. The inside measurement was only sixty cubits long and twenty broad ; but when porch and walls and priests' chambers are included, the outside measurement could not have been much less than a hundred cubits by fifty.[1] The *Porch*, which was twenty cubits broad by ten deep, was adorned with two great pillars of brass, eighteen cubits high and of great thickness, crowned with capitals of lilywork and other ornamental carving. These pillars were called Jachin and Boaz :[2] the very naming of them suggests that they had an important place in the symbolism of the Temple, and possibly they had some analogy to the pillars of Israel's primitive worship. The main chamber of the Temple—the *Holy Place*—was forty cubits long by twenty broad, and (probably) thirty high. The floor was of fir, the walls were of cedar and adorned with carving : both floor and walls were overlaid with gold. The windows were placed high up, and looked out upon the roof : they admitted only a moderate amount of light. This chamber contained little furniture : the golden candlesticks, the table of shewbread, and the golden altar of incense. Further within was the *Oracle* or *Holy of Holies*, to which access was had by folding-doors of olive-wood, carved and overlaid with gold. It was a dark cubical enclosure, and measured twenty cubits every way ; and, like the Holy Place, its woodwork of cedar was also overlaid with gold. Within it was placed the Ark, over

[1] To find the length in feet, add one half more to the number given. The cubit of early times was probably rather less than eighteen inches.

[2] The words mean "He will establish," and "in Him is strength."

which were two cherubim of olive-wood overlaid with gold, having outspread wings which touched each other above the Ark, and stretched to the side-walls of the Oracle. Round these sacred chambers were built numerous small chambers, three storeys high, the main entrance to which was on the south side. Lastly, in the court in front stood the great Altar of Burnt-offering, the molten sea resting on twelve figures of oxen, and the ten brasen lavers which moved on wheels. This court was the real place of worship for Israel: the Temple itself—the dwelling-place of Jehovah—was entered by the priests alone.

175. When the Temple was finished, it was consecrated with great solemnity to Jehovah's worship. In the midst of a vast procession of priests and representatives of all the tribes of Israel, the Ark of the Covenant was brought up from the citadel to the holy place prepared for it. Innumerable sacrifices were offered, and Solomon himself spoke the word of dedication:

> "The sun reveals itself in the heavens,
> But Jehovah is pleased to dwell in darkness.
> I have built Thee an house of habitation,
> A place for Thee to dwell in for ever."[1]

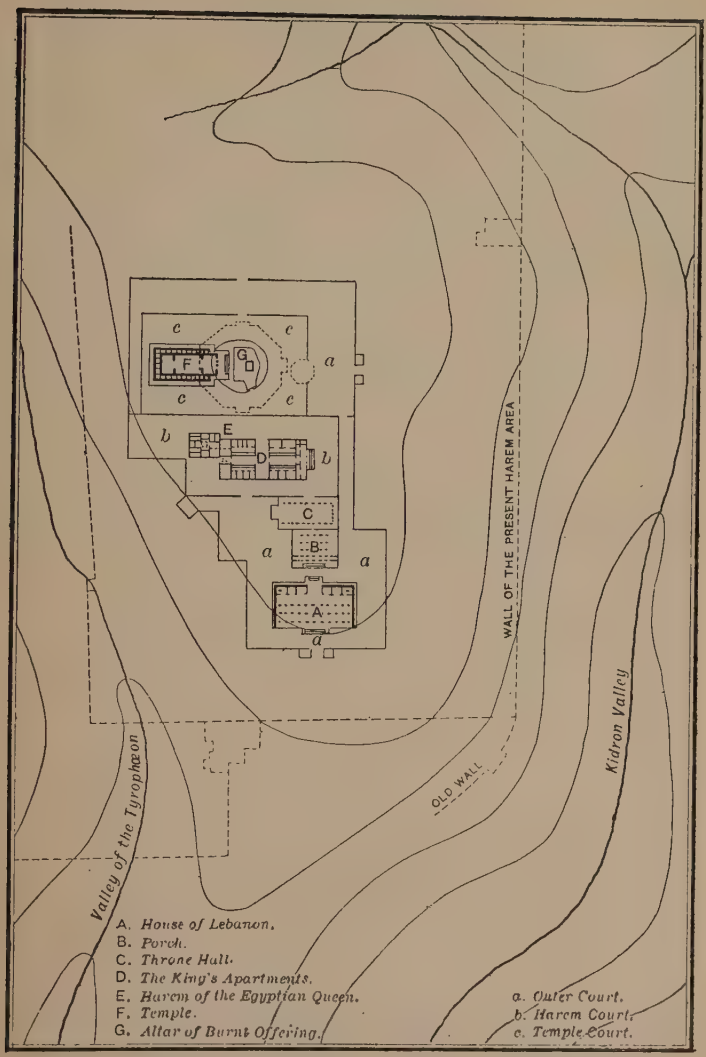
176. The question has been asked and variously answered, What definite end had Solomon in view in the building of the Temple? Did he intend it to be the common sanctuary of all Israel, and so to displace all other sanctuaries and altars in the land? Or did he build it simply as an adjunct to his

[1] 1 Kings viii. 12, 13, together with the addition—probably authentic—given in the LXX after ver. 53 (see the discussion of these verses by W. R. Smith, *The O.T. in the Jewish Church*, pp. 403–404). The precise date of this feast of Dedication cannot be determined with certainty. In 1 Kings viii. 2, 65, it is apparently identified with the feast of Tabernacles, and is said to have taken place in the *seventh* month; while in 1 Kings vi. 38 the Temple is stated to have been finished in the *eighth* month. These data may be harmonised by supposing that the dedication took place shortly before the entire completion of the building, or that it was delayed till the following year, the twelfth of Solomon's reign. Some have followed the indications given in 1 Kings ix. 1–9, especially ver. 3, and conclude that the feast took place after both Temple and palace were completed; but it is hard to believe that the dedication of the Temple should be delayed so long.

palace, with the same intention as monarchs who build a chapel for their private use? Looking at the question from all sides, it does not seem to us that either view accurately represents Solomon's mind. The Temple was more than the palace-sanctuary: it contained the sacred Ark, a truly national symbol, and its worship was ordered on a broad national scale. The sanctuary of the king was also *the* sanctuary of the kingdom. On the other hand, the fact that it was designed as the chief sanctuary of Israel did not imply any intention on Solomon's part to make it the sole and only sanctuary of the land. Centralisation lay still in the future. There was as yet no thought of dispensing with the innumerable places of worship throughout Canaan: the worship of the high places continued unaffected for centuries. The most that can be said is that, as Jerusalem was the centre of the political life of the nation, so the Temple worship was meant to be the centre of its religious life. Assuredly Solomon could not foresee that in process of time his Temple would be exalted to the position of the sole legitimate sanctuary of Israel; that it would become the corner-stone of a people's faith and hope, and gather into itself the entire worship of the land.

177. The building of the new royal palace occupied thirteen years. The work was carried out on a grand scale. This new residence lay higher than the old: probably, therefore, it adjoined the Temple, forming with it a great mass of building, surrounded by walled courts. (See the adjoined plan of the Palace, as given by Stade.) Farthest to the south, in the great court, stood the House of the Forest of Lebanon, together with two halls, the Hall of Pillars and the Hall of the Throne. The first of these—the *House of the Forest of Lebanon*—was a large edifice in three storeys: it took its name from the rows of cedar pillars in the basement, and was somewhat larger than the Temple in size. The pillared chamber below may have served as a reception-room for gatherings of the princes and elders of Israel: the upper chambers were used partly as an armoury.[1] Adjoining

[1] 1 Kings x. 17; Isa. xxii. 8.



PLAN OF SOLOMON'S PALACE (ACCORDING TO STADE).

this house were the two smaller buildings: the *Hall of Pillars*—perhaps a waiting-room for those who had brought their causes to court—and the *Hall of the Throne*, where the king heard causes in person and gave judgment. At one end of this judgment-hall stood Solomon's great throne of ivory and gold, with figured lions on the sides, as well as on the steps that led up to it. Farther north still stood the *Royal Palace* itself, together with the *House of Pharaoh's daughter*—forming doubtless the most imposing pile of all, though the dimensions are not given. All these buildings were of the most substantial kind, some of the stones of the foundations being from twelve to fifteen feet long. With the magnificent Temple close by, they formed an architectural pile such as Israel had never yet seen, and aided to extend and perpetuate the fame of the great king. While the memory of the vast expense and the forced labour employed in rearing them soon died away, the name of the founder was handed down to the admiration of posterity.

178. **Solomon's Greatness.**—In this magnificent palace the great king lived in befitting state. Here he held his public court, consulted with his officials of State, issued decrees for the realm, and gave judgment from his ivory throne. The increased list of officials marks the growing complexity of his government as compared with the older régime. Benaiah was military commander; Zadok was high priest of the Temple; several of the ministers of State were continued from David's time, and in some cases the former ministers were succeeded by their sons.[1] Ahishar became overseer of the palace: Adoniram was master of the levy; and Azariah was placed over the revenue-officers. A survey of the list shows that Solomon had the wisdom to retain many of the officials who had served his father, though he must have had many others—captains of his horsemen, governors of his cities, commanders in his navy—whose names have not

[1] So Jehoshaphat continued in office, as Recorder, and Shisha (or Seraiah) the Scribe was succeeded by his sons.

been mentioned. A more detailed account is given of the revenue-officers or victuallers of Solomon's household. The whole country was divided into twelve districts, differing in some respects from the old tribal divisions. Over each of these districts an officer was placed, whose special duty in reference to the court was to gather and send in from his district a supply of provisions—flour, meal, oxen, sheep, etc.—one month yearly to the royal table. As several of these officers were princes in rank, it seems probable that they were more than commissariat-officers. They may also have superintended the raising of the levies of men required for the king's building operations, and acted generally as the royal deputies or governors of the districts assigned to them.

179. At the head of all these officials stood King Solomon, whose word was law, and whose decisions none dared to dispute. His power was doubtless strengthened by the glory of his father's achievements ; but he also possessed qualities of his own, which, added to his successful enterprises, helped to exalt his name and fame. He was a man of wide and various culture. He had a taste for architecture, for poetry and music. He had gifts of shrewd observation, and great knowledge of men : three thousand proverbs and a thousand songs were attributed to his pen. He was regarded as the originator of Israel's gnomic wisdom.[1] But he was not merely a sage, an utterer of wise sayings ; he could apply his wisdom in the practical details of government. A typical illustration of his keen judgment was his decision in the case of two women who both claimed to be the mother of the same child ; where, by bringing to light the respective feelings toward the infant, he proved in a striking way the true maternity. Another example of his wise government may be seen in his endeavour to develop the nation in all the arts of peaceful civilisation. Some have found a further illustration of his practical wisdom in the new twelvefold division he

[1] Some of his sayings may be found in the Book of Proverbs ; a great part of that collection was ascribed in later days to his authorship.

made of his realm ; where, by ignoring the tribal limits, he helped to obliterate the old tribal clannishness and jealousy.

180. Solomon's public policy was so far successful, that he himself became one of the wealthiest monarchs of the East. He "made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars as the sycomore trees of the lowlands for abundance." The nation was dazzled by the unwonted vision of royal splendour : the gold and silver pouring into the royal treasuries, the magnificent buildings, the strange treasures imported from afar, and the immense provision that came regularly from all parts of the kingdom for the support of the royal establishment. The story of Solomon's magnificence reaches its crowning point in the picture of the Queen of Sheba, who came from the remotest parts of Arabia to see his wealth and wisdom, and who confessed when she departed that the half had not been told her of his glory.

181. **The reverse Side.**—Yet all this magnificence had another side ; and whether we look at Solomon's public life or at his personal example, we find that, all through his career, wisdom was mingled with folly.

182. In his private life, Solomon yielded to the sin of self-indulgence, and in his connubial relations set a bad precedent to court and nation. Besides his Egyptian queen, he had an immense harem.[1] It is true that many of his marriages may be explained as due to wise political motives, as aiding to establish his influence throughout the land and to cement his peaceful alliance with the surrounding nations. But after all possible allowance has been made for the exigencies of royalty, as well as for the laxer customs that then prevailed, one cannot help concluding that in this matter Solomon was following the worst example of Oriental kings. The evil had many disastrous effects ; but there was one result which was specially noteworthy

[1] The Song of Songs speaks of 60 queens, 80 concubines, and slave-girls innumerable : the Book of Kings tells of 700 wives and 300 concubines—a round thousand. Popular tradition may have greatly magnified the numbers.

—the system reacted fatally on Solomon's religious practice. Under the influence of his foreign wives, he came not only to tolerate their heathen worship, but also to assist and take part in it. On the Mount of Olives sanctuaries were built for Chemosh the god of Moab, Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and other divinities; and no doubt Solomon himself took part in the worship he had authorised at their shrines. This was more than tolerance: in those days it rather bespoke a heart of religious indifference, or of unworthy superstition.

183. In Solomon's public administration, too, the wisdom of his peaceful policy cannot be praised without serious reservations. No doubt the prevailing peace of Solomon's reign permitted the Israelites to develop the natural resources of the land, and to take advantage of their commercial opportunities. Foreign alliances, accompanied by freedom of trade, opened new sources of wealth to the people, and, by bringing new interests and ambitions into play, must have enlarged the horizon of the national life. But the secularising policy had its dangers; and the example of Solomon himself—his various matrimonial alliances, his excessive toleration in matters of religion—must have seriously affected the national ideals. Through the open door of the peaceful relations established with the surrounding peoples, there came not only an increase of trade, but also an influx of new ideas and customs that tended to bring Israel to the spiritual level of their heathen neighbours. One may doubt even whether in point of material prosperity the nation as a whole was so greatly benefited by the extensions of trade encouraged by the king. The wealth of Solomon did not necessarily mean the wealth and prosperity of the people generally. Even his maritime commerce was rather calculated to serve the pride and magnificence of the royal trader than to promote any really useful trade. Dealing as it did in articles of useless luxury, it helped to exalt the royal pride and to swell the magnificence of the court; but it added little to the nation's wellbeing. Nor must it be forgotten that Solomon's fondness

for splendour was carried to the point of selfish extravagance, and pressed hard upon his subjects. In the building of his royal palaces and the maintenance of his royal court, he encroached upon the resources of his people, and made serious inroads upon their freedom. His introduction of forced labour, in which he probably followed the example of his father-in-law the King of Egypt, was peculiarly oppressive and odious to the nation. An indication of their feeling is given in the story of Jeroboam's attempted insurrection,—the commencement of a movement which reached its climax under Solomon's successor. As the later issue showed, there was a widespread sense of soreness and dissatisfaction. Solomon's magnificence was maintained at too great a cost: his imposition of compulsory labour was justly regarded as an encroachment on the rights of the people.

184. **Concluding Estimate.**—On the whole, the reign of Solomon, with all its outward magnificence, gives one the impression of an Oriental despotic rule, in which the welfare of the people is made quite subordinate to the personal interests and caprices of the king. There was a canker at the root of all Solomon's magnificence: the more closely we scrutinise the details of his government, the more evident appears the selfish despotism that lay behind all his achievements. Even the building of the Temple—his greatest work—proves no more than that he recognised the value of Israel's worship, and accommodated himself to the trend of circumstance: his open laxity otherwise in religious matters makes one suspect that in this work too he was prompted by a regard for his own glory rather than for the honour of Jehovah or the religious interests of the people. This and the rest of his great works were accomplished at a cost which indicated the inconsiderate despot rather than the true king and shepherd of Israel. And while his peaceful policy and his encouragement of commerce and culture promoted the growth of civilisation, the progress was dearly bought by the general levelling of religious ideas, and the growth of a more secular spirit in king and people.

185. In truth, Solomon is the type of king against whom Samuel is depicted as having warned the people, when he announced to them that instead of being the servant of his people, he would make the people serve him, and use them for his own pleasures till they cried out by reason of the oppression. And we cannot doubt that his portrait was before the mind of the prophet who sketched the picture of the bad and ungodly king in Deuteronomy. "When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee . . . thou shalt at any rate set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose. . . . Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses. . . . Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away ; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold . . . that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left."[1] Such warnings find their point and illustration in the life of Solomon as nowhere else. With all its outward magnificence, Solomon's kingship, looked at from within, was a failure. A kingdom ready made had fallen to him ; but instead of consecrating his great natural gifts to meet his kingly obligations, he yielded to the temptations of his position. At the very beginning of his reign, his suspicious nature led him into cruelties which contrasted strongly with the magnanimity of his father. Later, dazzled by his own greatness, and carried away by the example of Oriental kings, he was led to treat the people as his instruments and slaves, sacrificing them to his passion for fine architecture, to his love of pomp and luxury, and even to the indulgence of his lusts. So this wise king fell into paths of folly, becoming more and more a sham-king, so far as the ends of true kingship are concerned ; as his kingdom became more and more a show-kingdom, prosperous on the surface, but really enslaved and dissatisfied, and ready to break into fragments at the first favourable opportunity.

[1] Deut. xvii. 14–20.

CHAPTER X.

THE DECLINE OF THE GOLDEN AGE.

186. The Signs of Decline under Solomon. 1 Kings xi. 29–39.
187. The Division of the Kingdom at his Death. 1 Kings xii.
188. This Division a political and religious Disaster.
189. Later idealising of the Reigns of David and Solomon.
190. Its comparative Truth.

CHAPTER X.

THE DECLINE OF THE GOLDEN AGE.

186. In the single century of its existence, the united kingdom of Israel had passed through all the successive stages of development—youth, manhood, and declining age. Under Saul it had risen out of subjection and anarchy, and awakened to the consciousness of its strength. Under David it had reached the zenith of its power, and had entered on a course of vigorous and healthy development in every direction. In the reign of Solomon the first signs of decadence are seen. In some respects, indeed, the nation continued to advance. There was a further expansion of trade, an increase of wealth and luxury and the refinements of civilisation; and religion as represented in the Temple worship was surrounded with a more gorgeous ceremonial. But already the gold was becoming dim, and the fine gold changed. The increasing luxury brought the usual temptations of sensuality and self-indulgence in its train; the growing trade benefited the few; and the unity of the kingdom seemed dearly bought at the price of absolutism and tyranny. Behind the glitter of Solomon's splendour were heard the groans of a people who felt themselves oppressed by his exactions; and behind the pompous religious ceremonial lay the secularising spirit which ignored the distinctive character of Israel's faith, and placed Jehovah on the same level as the heathen gods. In the condemnation of Solomon's reign both people and prophets[1] were alike agreed; and sub-

[1] For indication of the prophetic view, see 1 Kings xi. 29–39.

sequent history confirmed their verdict. Scarcely had Solomon passed from the stage, when the kingdom was rent in twain, and the glory departed from Israel.

187. The leading spirit of the disaffected people was Jeroboam the Ephraimite. In Solomon's time he had been overseer over the levies which came from his district to work at the fortifications of Jerusalem. In that position he had a good opportunity of learning the temper of Solomon's subjects; and apparently had sympathised with their complaints, and encouraged the spirit of sedition. He became a marked man, and had to flee to Egypt. On Solomon's death he returned to Canaan, where the people were now ripe for rebellion. They were determined to recognise Solomon's successor only on condition that he would put an end to the system of exactions practised by the late king. Jeroboam made himself their spokesman; and when Rehoboam, the new king, came north to receive the homage of his subjects at Shechem, Jeroboam laid before him in a temperate way the people's just demands. But instead of endeavouring by wise concessions to conciliate the spirit of unrest, Rehoboam adopted the haughty tone of a despot, and rudely rebuffed the petitioners. Such an attitude was very ill advised at a time when the people were on the brink of rebellion: it simply hastened the catastrophe. The old cry arose, "To your tents, O Israel!" All the northern tribes revolted; and in a short time Jeroboam established himself as king of Israel, leaving to Rehoboam only Judah and Jerusalem,—a mere fragment of his kingdom.

188. This division of the kingdom was fatal to Israel's prosperity as a nation, and in many respects disastrous to her religion. Politically she never recovered from it. The elements of inner discord, conciliated or suppressed while the kingdom was united, now revived, and prevented all further growth. For half a century the nation wore itself out in civil dissensions and wars; and never again, through all the centuries of its existence, did it rise to its former glory. The religious life also suffered irreparably from this breach in the national unity. Instead of advancing

on the national-religious lines laid down by David, Israel now reverted rather to the conditions of the previous anarchic periods. Heathenism revived : idolatries increased, particularly in the northern division of the kingdom ; and the nation as a whole declined more and more from the position it had distinctively occupied. Henceforth Israel presents to us the sombre spectacle of a nation falling back more and more into the superstitions and abominations of heathendom ; while true religion survived only in a few choice spirits, who clung passionately to the better ideals of the past ; and strove—we know how vainly—to realise these in their nation.

189. After ages looked back to the times of David and Solomon as to the Golden Age of Israel's history, and surrounded with a halo of glory the names of the two kings under whom Israel had reached the zenith of its power. The evils of the time were gradually forgotten, or fell into the dim background ; while fame gratefully magnified the merits of the king who had founded the dynasty of Judah, and of his son who had built the Temple of Zion. The one became the pattern of piety ; the other, of all wisdom ; while the land as united under the rule of these monarchs was conceived to have attained the goal of national prosperity and blessedness.

190. In reality the age was less golden than it seemed to these later generations ; but in a comparative sense it deserved its reputation, as contrasted with the ages of anarchy and superstition that preceded, or with the succeeding ages of division and declension and national decrepitude. In the light of this comparison one can more easily sympathise with those who glorified the age of the united kingdom ; and can readily understand, too, how later prophets could use it as the earthly counterpart, or rather the first sketch and prophecy, of the future Messianic time.

APPENDIX.

A. THE SOURCES OF THE HISTORY.

191. ALTHOUGH matters of minute criticism can hardly be brought before Bible classes with advantage, it seems absolutely necessary that the teacher should have some acquaintance with the general trend of critical opinion in regard to the Books of Samuel and Kings. This is the more especially the case in dealing with the history of King Saul. Those who study the Bible narratives carefully can scarcely fail to be convinced that the repetitions, parallel stories, breaks of continuity (cf. 1 Sam. x. 8 with xv. 8 ff.), and apparent inconsistencies in the history, are best explained by a frank recognition that the work has been compiled from various sources, and that the different strands of narrative forming the basis of the work may have varying degrees of historical value. While there is still considerable diversity of opinion as to the precise number of documents and the date in which each of them appeared, there is wonderful agreement as to the relative chronology and the comparative value of the various pieces. The following indications may be given as a basis for further inquiry :—

192. The story of Samuel and Saul extends from 1 Sam. i. to 2 Sam. i. ; and the sources may be thus classified :

(1) To the earliest period belong 1 Sam. i. ; ii. 11–26 ; iii. 1–iv. 1*a* ; iv. 1*b*–vii. 2*a* ; ix. 1–x. 7, 9–16 ; xi. in part ; xiii. 1–7*a* ; xiii. 15*b*–xiv. 46, 52 ; xvi. 14–23 ; xvii. 1–xviii. 5 (LXX) ; xviii. 6–30 (LXX) ; xix. 1–17 ; xxi. 1–9 ; xxii. 1–xxiii. 13 ; xxv. ; xxvii.–xxviii. 2 ; xxix.–xxxi. ; 2 Sam. i. (in original form). This list contains no entirely homogeneous narrative ; but the further

subdivisions and groupings of the narratives rest on very precarious grounds.

(2) Probably somewhat later are 1 Sam. xv.; xx. 1*b*–42; xxi. 10–15; xxiii. 14–xxiv.; xxvi.; xxviii. 3–25.

(3) To a still later (Deuteronomic or exilic) period are to be assigned 1 Sam. ii. 1–10, 27–36; vii. 2*b*–viii. 22; x. 8, 17–24; xi. in revised form; xii.; xiii. 7*b*–15*a*; xiv. 47–51; xvi. 1–13; xix. 18–xx. 1*a*.

193. On the following page we have given a tabular view of the sources according to Kuenen and Nowack, which may be taken as representative of the common trend of critical analysis (for further tables, giving the analyses of Wellhausen, Kittel, Budde, H. P. Smith, and others, see W. Nowack, *Handkommentar zum AT., Die Bücher Samuel*). We may notice some of the considerations that have led to this arrangement of documents, so far as they bear on the lives of Saul and David.

194. According to the account given in 1 Sam. ix. 1–x. 16, Samuel acted as the instigator of the people in the selection of a king, and the movement in that direction was divinely approved, as the means of "saving the people out of the hand of the Philistines" (ix. 16); but according to the account in 1 Sam. viii., x. 17–24, and xii., Samuel was utterly opposed to the movement, regarded it as rebellion against God, and only yielded under protest to the people's desire. It has been held that the two accounts, though written from somewhat different points of view, do not really conflict: that Samuel at first had serious objections to the change proposed, but later overcame his scruples so far as to promote the movement. But this compromise is quite artificial: the two series of documents give distinct views of Samuel's policy, and rest on a quite different appreciation of the historical situation. It seems more likely that the spirit of opposition to the monarchy was developed by later experience, and that the unfavourable view of kingly power, which is here ascribed to Samuel, is the reflex of later popular and prophetic thought. Again, in the one strand of narrative Samuel is represented as a Seer of local reputation; in the other, as a judge whose word went forth to all Israel, who led the nation to victorious battle with the Philistines, and made his sons also judges over Israel (chaps. vii. and viii.). The tendency to idealise the time of Samuel is further seen in the picture of Israel's independence

TABULAR VIEW OF SOURCES ACCORDING TO KUENEN AND NOWACK.

	Pre-Deuteronomic.	?	Deuteronomic.	Redactions.
Kuenen	1 Sam. 1. 2^{11-26} 3^{1}–7^{2a} 9^{1}–$10^{7.\ 9-16}$ 11^{1-11} 13^{1-7} 13^{15b}–$14^{46\ \text{or}\ 51}$ 16^{14-23} 17^{1}–$18^{5.\ 6-30}$ (LXX) 19^{1-17} 21^{1-9} 22^{1}–23^{13} 25. 27–28^{2} 29–31 in part 2 Sam. 1^{1}–5^{16} 6. 8. 9–20	? of an intervening period 15. 20^{1b-42} 21^{10-15} 23^{14}–24. 26. 28^{3-25} 31 as revised 2 Sam. 5^{17-25} Of unknown date: 21^{1-14} and 24. 21^{15-22} and 23^{8-39}	$2^{1-10.\ 27-36}$ 7^{2b}–8^{22} $10^{8.\ 17-26}$ 11^{12-15} 12. 13^{8-15a} 16^{1-13} 19^{18}–20^{1a} 2 Sam. 7. 22–23^{7}	2^{22b} 6^{15} 2 Sam. 12^{10-12} 15^{24}
Nowack	1 Sam. 1. 2^{11-26} 3–7^{1} 9^{1}–$10^{7.\ 9-16}$ $11^{1-11.\ 15}$ $13^{2-7a.\ 15b-18.\ 23}$ $14^{1-46.\ 52}$ 15 16^{14-23} 17^{1}–18^{5} (LXX) $18^{6ff.}$ (LXX) $19^{1-10.\ 11-17\ (?)}$ $20^{1-3.\ 18-39}$ 21^{1-9} $22^{1-4.\ 6-18.\ 20}$–$23^{5.\ 7-14}$ 23^{16}–24^{23} 25. 26.? 27^{1}–28^{2} 28^{3-25} 29–31 2 Sam. $1^{1-4.\ 11.\ 12.\ 17ff.\ (?)}$ 2–6. $8^{7-10.\ 13-18}$ 9–11. 12^{15b}–20	2^{1-10} 13^{7b-15a} 15^{24-31} 16^{1-13} 19^{18}–$20^{1a.}$ $5-17.\ 40-42$ 21^{10-15} 22^{5} 23^{6} 2 Sam. 1^{6-10} 3^{12} … $^{17-19}$ $5^{1.\ 2}$ $12^{1-3.\ 13-15a}$ 21^{1-14} 24. 21^{15-22} 23^{8-39} 22–23^{7}	2^{27-36} 7^{2-17} 8. 10^{17-26} 12 2 Sam. 7.	$2^{8b\ 22b}$ 6^{15} $10^{8.\ 12a.}$ 25–27 11^{12-14} $13^{1.\ 19-22}$ 14^{47-51} $17^{10.\ 14b-16.\ 54}$ $18^{6a.\ 9-11.\ 12b.}$ $29b.\ 30$ $19^{2.\ 3}$ 22^{19} 23^{15} 24^{14} 25^{1} 27^{7} 28^{17-19a} 2 Sam. $1^{5.\ 16-18}$ $2^{10a.\ 11}$ $5^{4.\ 5.\ 8b}$ $8^{1-6.\ 11.\ 12}$ 10^{15-19a} 12^{10-12} 14^{25-27} 15^{24} 20^{23-26} $21^{50.\ 51}$ with others of minor importance.

as having been achieved by Samuel and continuing all the days of his life (vii. 13–15): a picture not easily harmonised with other accounts, which give a sombre view of what we must regard as the actual state of matters (ix. 16, x. 5, and xiii. 19–22, which speaks of a general disarmament of the people by the Philistines). The differences are such as to indicate that 1 Sam. ix., x. 1–7, 9–16, xiii. 1–7*a*, and xiii. 15*b*–xiv. represent an older narrative, and one closer to the facts, than that found in vii.–viii., x. 17–24, and xii.

195. Of the two stories recounting the breach between Samuel and Saul (1 Sam. xiii. 7*b*–15*a*, and xv.), the latter represents the prophetic standpoint, and stands in closer relation to the actual conditions, while the other occupies the standpoint of a somewhat rigid ceremonialism. Similarly, of the duplicate narratives relating to the origin of the proverb, "Saul among the prophets" (1 Sam. x. 10–13 and xix. 18–24), the earlier is generally accepted as having the better claim to authenticity, from its connection with 1 Sam. ix.–x. 7, as well as from its greater suitableness to the historical situation. The story of the anointing of David by Samuel (1 Sam. xvi. 1–13) is evidently dependent on the narrative of the previous chapter, and is probably a later continuation of it (xvi. 1 follows close on xv. 35, but the somewhat awkward joining betrays a different pen): it is certainly later than the story of David's introduction to Saul's court, as given in the remainder of the chapter.

196. The problem of the following chapter (xvii.), containing the story of David's fight with Goliath, is a very complicated one. As it stands, the story ignores the fact that David was already introduced to Saul, and represents him as coming direct from the sheep-folds, a lad quite unacquainted with the arts of war and unknown at court. It thus stands in direct contradiction with the account given in the previous chapter (cf. xvi. 18, 21 and xvii. 33, 38–40, 55–58: xvii. 15 looks like an attempt to harmonise the accounts, but it hardly agrees with the fact that David already "stood before Saul," and was his armour-bearer). The problem is further complicated by the fact that the Septuagint translation shows very considerable variations. It omits vv. 12–31, 41, 48*b*, 50, 55–58; in ver. 36 it adds, "Shall I not go and smite him, and take away to-day the reproach from Israel; for who is this uncircumcised who hath defied," etc.; in

ver. 43, in reply to the question of the Philistine, it adds David's answer—"And David said, No, but worse than a dog"; and there are smaller variations of less consequence. The question rises, which of the two versions is to be preferred. Many critics are of opinion that the Septuagint represents the original text, and that when the additions of the Hebrew text are removed the contradiction above noticed entirely disappears. But the argument here is not quite conclusive. The inconsistency is not entirely removed by adopting the Septuagint version; for in the passages that remain David is still spoken of as a youth, quite inexperienced in the art of war; whereas in the previous chapter he is described and recommended to Saul as a "mighty man of valour and a man of war" (cf. xvii. 33, 38 ff. with xvi. 18). Further arguments, therefore, are necessary to prove the compositeness of the chapter and the originality of the Septuagint text. These may be summarised as follows:—(1) The awkward joining of vv. 12–31 with what precedes and follows; ver. 12 reads like the beginning of a new story, and ver. 32 reads abruptly after ver. 31—we should expect Saul to speak first, after having sent for David. On the other hand, ver. 32 joins on admirably to ver. 11, giving the minstrel's courageous word to Saul in reference to the fear inspired by Goliath. (2) The verses added in the Hebrew text form a more or less continuous narrative, and may readily be regarded as inserted from an independent account of David's fight with Goliath. (3) In the case of the smaller variations the Septuagint is almost always preferable, and approves itself as the earlier text. Thus vv. 41, 48*b*, and 50 are better omitted: they add nothing to the vividness of the story, being little more than repetitions of what is already stated: while the detail as to the shield-bearer in ver. 41 (cf. ver. 7) only raises the question what part he took in the fight, for he is not mentioned again. The slighter variations of the Septuagint in vv. 37 (omission of "And David said"), 39 (he assayed to go "once or twice": omitting "he had not proved it," which is later repeated), 46 ("thy carcase and" the carcases of the host, etc.), 49 ("through the helmet"), and 52 ("Gath" instead of "Gai") are distinctly better readings. Similarly the two noteworthy additions of the Septuagint in vv. 36 and 43 are no mere insertions in a narrative that is complete without them, but fill a real gap in each case: in the latter case the editor of the present Hebrew text may have omitted

David's defiant answer ("No, but worse than a dog") because the tone was more brutal than pious. Generally speaking, the Septuagint affords the better text in these instances, and it is more natural to think of the Hebrew text as being the result of later addition and revision. Certainly in none of these cases can any harmonising motive be alleged on the part of the Septuagint. (4) The following section (xviii. 6–30) contains similar variations between the Septuagint and our Hebrew text; and since there is little doubt that the Septuagint version is preferable in that section, the presumption is that it is also preferable in chap. xvii.

197. On the other hand, there are competing arguments that tell in favour of the present Hebrew text, which may be briefly summarised. (1) The story as it stands is a unity, without further break in the continuity than is required to bring forward the several actors in the drama (so at ver. 12, *e.g.*). The narrative is consistent in all its parts. The youth of David is painted not only in the passage omitted by the Septuagint (vv. 12–31), but also in passages common to both versions (vv. 33, 39, 40, 42). The language used is similar throughout. Budde points particularly to the repetition of the language used by David in ver. 26 in his later word to Saul in ver. 36: he takes this as proving incontestably that vv. 12–31 are "of the same flesh and bone" with the rest of the narrative. If the Septuagint reading of ver. 36 is accepted, the identity of language with ver. 26 is, of course, still more marked. The most natural view here is that ver. 36 is a repetition by the same author of the words used in ver. 26; but if the Septuagint is original, and vv. 12–31 part of a later story, we must conclude that ver. 36 is the original and ver. 26 the copy. (The supposition that the additional words in ver. 36 of the Septuagint are a later insertion there is not borne out by a comparison of the passages in dispute; for the words can be more easily dispensed with in ver. 26 than in ver. 36). Of course it is conceivable that the editor who inserted the passage vv. 12–31 first took the words from the older narrative in ver. 36, and having thus written them once shortened them when he came to rewrite ver. 36; but a theory is in difficulties when it requires the aid of such complicated hypotheses. (2) Another argument in favour of our present text is that if the additional matter be dropped, the story of Jonathan's covenant with David (xviii. 1–4) will have no place in the original strand of narrative,

although that story is implied in the later narrative of the Septuagint itself (cf. xx. 8). The story really belongs to the original version; and the Septuagint by its harmonising omission has inadvertently left an obvious lacuna in its own narrative.

198. So the argument stands at present, and whichever conclusion we adopt is beset with difficulties of its own. In general, the hypothesis of the incorporation of additional matter is more acceptable than that of harmonising excision; yet we have sufficient evidence that alterations were at times attempted with a view to removing apparent contradictions. We find such an alteration, for example, made by the writer of Chronicles on the text in 2 Sam. xxi. 19—"Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, slew Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam." This is altered in 1 Chron. xx. 5 to—'Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam." We have here an attempt on the part of the Chronicler to reconcile what were evidently variants in the original floating tradition. That such variants do exist throughout our history can scarcely be denied; and one can only express astonishment at the forced interpretation of certain modern harmonisers, who suggest in this case that "Elhanan the son of Jair" is but another name for "David the son of Jesse"! The case here noticed is not without a bearing on the problem presented in chap. xvii. If 1 Sam. xvi. 14–23 be taken to represent an older tradition of David's rise than that recorded in the following chapter,—whether in its longer or shorter form,—the historicity of David's fight with Goliath becomes more or less problematical. It becomes still more questionable in view of the Elhanan story: the balance of historical probability may even lie in favour of the competing tradition. In any case we have in these varying versions of the Septuagint and the present Hebrew text a clear proof of the freedom with which the Revisers went to work, in adding new material or in excising what seemed unnecessary.

199. Again, the incidents recorded in 1 Sam. xviii.–xx. form a very broken narrative, and the piecing together of various traditions can be easily detected. In the 18th chapter we have the account of Saul's rising jealousy, his first attempt to spear David, his failure to keep his promise as to Merab, and his offer of Michal to David on such hard conditions as

would—he hoped—bring about the hero's death at the hands of the Philistines. Then in chap. xix. Jonathan warns his friend of Saul's design on his life (though David, having already been nearly speared by Saul, would scarcely need such warning !), and by his generous intervention effects a temporary reconciliation; and thereupon follows another attempt by Saul on David's life, when David flees first to his own house, and then to Ramah. We cannot but conclude that David has now finally fled from the court; but in chap. xx. the story returns to what must be regarded as the previous situation. Here David is still at court, being expected to dine with the king; and Jonathan is not to be persuaded without further evidence that his father has any designs upon David. Only after he has put his father to the test, is Jonathan convinced that his friend's flight is advisable; and David finally flees to Judah. The contrast between the situation in chap. xix. and that presupposed in chap. xx. is particularly noticeable. The difficulties of the story are removed by adopting the Septuagint version of xviii. 6–30, where the incident of Saul's attempt to spear David is omitted (it may be taken as a duplicate of the story in xix. 9, 10), and by assuming that chap. xx. is a later variant of the account in xix. 8–17.

200. The two stories of David's flight to Gath, given in xxi. 10–15 and in xxvii., may reasonably be regarded likewise as only differing accounts of the same fact. The latter narrative takes no account of the former, and implies that David's passing over to the enemy was the last resort of one who despaired of safety in his own land. If a choice is to be made between these duplicates, the latter story is clearly to be preferred, being closely connected with the succeeding accounts of David's lengthened stay at Ziklag. The suggestion seems reasonable that the other story was shaped with a view to reducing the connection of David with Gath to the smallest dimensions possible. An alliance of any kind with the Philistines must have appeared rather shocking to the mind of later Judaism; and any modification of the tradition would be welcome which placed David's conduct in the light of a mere passing expedient. Similarly, the two narratives which record the magnanimity of David in sparing Saul's life (xxiv. and xxvi.) are probably parallel stories of the same incidents, the differences being such as might

be expected to appear in the growth of a popular tradition. Both narratives perhaps belong to the secondary stratum of tradition; but of the two, chap. xxvi. is generally regarded as containing the older form of the story.

201. Lastly, here we have to notice the varying accounts of Saul's death, as given in 1 Sam. xxxi. and in 2 Sam. i. 1–16. In the one case Saul is said to have requested his armour-bearer to slay him, and on his refusal, to have fallen upon his own sword; while in the other, according to the relation of the Amalekite, the already wounded king was put to death by the Amalekite, at his own request. It is conceivable that the Amalekite's story was a fabrication, and that the man lied to David in hope of gaining a reward for putting Saul out of the way; but the record gives no hint of this, and David acted on the assumption that his story was true. We seem to be shut up to choose between the stories. Kuenen prefers the Amalekite's story: he thinks that 1 Sam. xxxi. was modified later in a manner unfavourable to Saul, the representations there given of Saul's fear and despair (xxxi. 3, 4; cf. xxviii. 5) being little in keeping with Saul's general character. The grounds of this decision seem rather slender: so far as the character of Saul is concerned, there is little to choose between the stories. With more plausibility, other critics take 2 Sam. i. 6–16 as due in part to a later revision, in which the original story of the Amalekite was altered. In proof of this, they point to 2 Sam. iv. 10 as showing that David was ignorant of any such deed on the part of the Amalekite. David there declares that when one came to him in Ziklag and told him of Saul's death, "thinking to have brought good tidings," he took hold of him and slew him: which, he adds, was "the reward I gave him for his tidings." The suggestion is not unreasonable that the story in chap. i. was modified, partly with a view to relieve Saul of the heavy guilt of suicide, and partly to clear David of the charge of having slain—without much cause—a man who brought him evil tidings.

202. The story of David's reign is contained in 2 Sam. ii.–1 Kings ii., and presents on the whole a continuous narrative, with few traces of alteration and revision. There is a clear division between chaps. i.–viii. and chaps. ix.–xx. There is less continuity in the first section. The chronological notices (2 Sam.

ii. 10, 11, v. 4, 5) have the appearance of later insertions, as likewise the account of David's family at Hebron (iii. 2–5). Also 2 Sam. v. 17–25 stands disconnected, and seems (cf. "the hold," v. 17) to refer to a time when David still used Adullam as his headquarters, and thus probably to some time previous to the capture of Jerusalem (2 Sam. xxi. 15–22 and xxiii. 8–39 refer in all probability to the same earlier period). Chap. vii. is marked by the spirit and language of a Deuteronomic writer, though the groundwork may be older. Chap. ix.–xx. with 1 Kings i. and ii. give an uninterrupted story of David's family relations and the later troubles of his reign, and have almost the value of contemporary narrative. Though the writer was not quite contemporary with the events (cf. xviii. 18, "unto this day," xii. 20, "house of the Lord"—a slight anachronism), he is free from the later tendency to idealise the character of David, and his work is generally regarded as an historical source of the very highest rank. The three remaining chapters of 2 Samuel are evidently an appendix, consisting of extracts drawn from various sources, and loosely bound together: the poetical pieces assigned to David seem to be written in the spirit and language of a Deuteronomic author who regarded David as the ideal king of Israel.

203. The problem raised in 1 Kings ii., recounting David's last charge to his successor, has been variously solved. The first part of the speech is indisputably Deuteronomic in its style; but the question remains whether vv. 5–9, containing instructions as to Joab, Barzillai, and Shimei, may not be authentically David's. Wellhausen ascribes the entire passage to a later writer, and denies that David is to be charged with such an unworthy testament: it is, he says, "the libel of a later hand that sought to invest David with a fictitious glory." Other critics retain these verses as forming an original part of the narrative, and regard the sentiments expressed as not inconsistent with the many-sided character of David. But the question of historic fact here is not determined entirely by literary criticism. Whether the passage in question be regarded as a later interpolation, or as being of a piece with ii. 13 ff. and thus part of the original narrative, we are still entitled to ask (1) whether David's secret instructions to his son would ever be made public, (2) whether Solomon's word—if he did make David's charge known—is to be

accepted as worthy of credit, and (3) whether the deeds of blood enjoined are not more in keeping with Solomon's character than with that of David. On the whole, we seem to have good grounds for believing that the tradition has here thrown upon David a responsibility that rests on Solomon alone, and has thus—perhaps unintentionally—cast a blot on David's character which he little deserved.

204. Lastly, the story of the reign of Solomon, narrated in 1 Kings ii.–xi., has for one of its original sources the "Book of the Acts of Solomon" (xi. 41), which was probably based on official records, and thus represented contemporary history; but it also contains passages that are written in the style of prophetic narrative, and of popular tradition. Later insertions are probably to be found in—

(*a*) 1 Kings iii. 2, 3, 14, 15, condemning the worship in the high places. The author of iii. 4 ff. had apparently no objection to make against Solomon's worshipping at the high place of Gibeon; and iii. 15 reads almost like a Deuteronomic correction of iii. 4.

(*b*) 1 Kings iv. 20–26, which is not in the Septuagint, and interferes with the context.

(*c*) 1 Kings vi. 11–13, viii. 14–61, xi. 29–39, 41–43, which are all strongly Deuteronomic in tone and language.

(*d*) 1 Kings ix. 1–9 and xi. 1–13, which present the point of view of an even later period.

205. The consideration of such critical data must of necessity influence our presentment of the history, and determine the emphasis to be laid on the different parts of the narrative. In general the older strands of narrative deserve the first consideration, and will possess higher claim to historical value. On the other hand, the mere fact that a certain section is dated somewhat later need not diminish its historical worth, except in certain cases,—as when it stands in contradiction with the data of an older narrative, or when the language and thought can be more appropriately conceived as the outcome of a later age. In every case, and from whatever source derived, the form and character of the narrative must be taken into account in determining its precise value as history. These principles must also be applied in using the Book of Chronicles, which, though compiled at a

very late period, and with a view to exalt the temple and it priesthood, still contains valuable supplements to the older books of Samuel and Kings.

B. CHRONOLOGY OF THE PERIOD.

842 Jehu tributary to Assyria.	The Philistine Oppression, *c.* 1100.
+ 95 years from Jeroboam to Jehu.	Saul's reign, 1037–1017.
937 Division of Kingdom.	Battle of Michmash, *c.* 1036.
+ 40 years of Solomon's reign.	Battle of Mount Gilboa, 1017.
977 First year of Solomon.	David's reign, 1017–977.
+ 40 years of David's reign.	Capture of Jerusalem, 1010.
1017 First year of David.	Solomon's reign, 977–937.
+ 20? years of Saul's reign.	Beginning of Temple, 974.
1037 First year of Saul.	Division of Kingdom, 937.

The first column here indicates the argument used for the structure of the chronological table in the second column. It starts from the revision of chronology that seems to be required by the corresponding Assyrian data. It is now generally admitted that forty years, more or less, must be deducted from the hitherto accepted dates of the early kings. Of course the calculation is only approximate. Thus it is not certain that Jehu acknowledged the overlordship of Assyria from the beginning of his reign, and perhaps a few years should be added to arrive at Jehu's first year. But as it is equally possible that the estimate of ninety-five years for the intervening period of the divided kingdom is a little too high (the first year of each king's reign perhaps coinciding with the last year of the preceding king), we may safely leave the calculation as it stands. The reigns of David and Solomon are evidently given in round numbers ; while for Saul's reign there are no precise data.

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